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DIGEST

OF

M. VICTOR COUSIN'S REPORT

ON THE STATE OF

PUBLIC INSTRUCTION IN PRUSSIA:

ALSO

THE ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK, TAKEN FROM THE REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF COMMON SCHOOLS OF 1836.

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PREFACE

TO THE FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

By furnishing a preface to the American edition of the Report of M. Cousin, to the French government, "On the State of Public Instruction in Prussia," the publication of which has excited such a lively interest in England, as well as in France, I do not think it necessary to eulogize its noble author or the merits of his incomparable work. The fact, that M. Cousin, the scholar, the philosopher, and the legislator, has examined and reported, by an appointment of the *French Government*, the workings of that admirable system of instruction adopted by Prussia and Germany, is a sufficient guarantee to make this volume welcomed by every American citizen. Many parts of this system of public instruction are not adapted to the spirit and feelings of the American people, nor to their form of civil government. Yet from the results of this great experi-

ment in giving the *whole people* that *kind* and *degree* of instruction which they need, some of the most useful and practical lessons may be obtained. The nature and operations of the mind are the same in all countries, and the relations which exist between knowledge and the intellectual and moral faculties, remain unchanged under every system of instruction and every form of government.

In Prussia, for the last fifty years, there has been, from experience and experiment, a constant accumulation of practical knowledge; the evils, either of teaching or legislating, which appeared, have received a remedy, and the highest point of excellence of one age, has been made the starting point of improvement by the age succeeding. This experimental knowledge is what we want. The reason why we legislate for the education of the people so badly, is, *there is no instruction in the past.* If full and able reports on the different systems of instruction had been made, there would be a record of practical information which would contain lessons more valuable to the teacher and legislator, than all the new projected theories and systems that were ever promulgated. But on the great subject of education there has been no book kept; there is no light in

the past to throw its rays into the future; no voice to teach and no decisions to counsel. With us what was experiment fifty years ago, is experiment still. That which was conjecture *then* is uncertainty *now*. On the subject of education, teachers and nations have had but little communication with each other—no exchange of views and sentiments—no mutual aid. Each one has toiled alone, and their *practical* knowledge has been buried with them.

But M. Cousin has made a full and faithful statement of the workings and practical application of the well-tried school system of Prussia. The American edition of this work will furnish our legislators, school committees, and school teachers, with instruction, not only from the highest authority, but also from the most enlightened source. The general circulation of this report, will, in my opinion, greatly improve our organized systems of public instruction, and furnish some of the most useful and practical hints to the guardians and teachers of our schools.

J. ORVILLE TAYLOR.

Oct. 25, 1835.

PREFACE TO THE DIGEST.

All who have heard of M. Cousin's Report on Public Instruction in Prussia, express a strong desire to obtain its valuable information. Yet the most of readers, from its large size, tedious detail and complicated appearance, are deterred from an attentive perusal. The friends of education, consequently, have often requested me to publish a brief, perspicuous Digest of this Report; believing that the schools of our country could not receive a more important service. While doing this, I have taken the liberty of adding some reflections which the reader, if he feels disposed, may find in the Notes.

Accompanying this Digest is the form and administration of the school system of New-York. This interesting part is from the pen of Gen. Dix; a gentleman who has distinguished himself as a scholar, and in the able and faithful performance of his duties as superintendent of common schools.

The school system of New-York, both in our sister states and abroad, is exciting no inconsiderable interest; I am almost daily receiving communications asking for its organization and results. I have now the privilege of giving this information to all, and from the best and most enlightened authority.

This book, therefore, contains the outlines of Two Great School Systems, and from two men, in whom the public must have the most implicit confidence.

J. ORVILLE TAYLOR.

SECTION I.

GENERAL ORGANIZATION OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

In proportion to the agrandizement of a state, is the complication of the various branches of public instruction, and the importance of the *central* administration, or the direction which the whole may receive from the hand of government.

It was not until 1819, that a special department of administration was consecrated to this object, with Baron von Altenstein at its head. I regard this change as of the highest importance. In the first place the service is much better performed, there being more complete unity in the central point, from which all emanates and to which all is addressed; and the authority, being more cogent, is better obeyed. In the next place, the high rank assigned to the head of public instruction marks the respect in which every thing relating to that important subject is held by the government; hence science assumes her proper place in the state. Civilization, the intellectual

If the minister learns from his correspondence that things are not going on well in any establishment, he sends the inspector best qualified for the particular case. This inspector, chosen for the particular occasion, instantly repairs to the place where his presence is needed; makes an inspection, the more accurate and profound because it is special; returns to Berlin, makes his report immediately, and a prompt and efficacious decision follows.*

I have now to lay before you the mode in which the minister, with the aid of his council, directs all parts of public instruction, throughout the whole extent of the monarchy.

Prussia is divided into ten provinces, viz., East Prussia, West Prussia, Posen, Pomerania, Brandenburg, Silesia, Saxony, Westphalia, Cleves, Lower Rhine.

Each of these provinces is subdivided into departments, called government or regency-circles, which comprise a district of greater or less extent.

Each of these departments is again subdivided into other circles, smaller than our *arrondissements* and larger than our *cantons*, called circles;

* From the want of a travelling inspector, the General Superintendent (except in the New-York system,) has not that actual information from the schools which he ought to possess

and each of these lesser circles is again divided into parishes.

Each department has a sort of council of prefecture, called a Regency, which has its president, who corresponds nearly to our prefect, only he is more controlled by the sense of the majority. As each department has its president, so likewise has each province one, bearing the title of head-president.

In Prussia, all public servants are paid; and as no post whatever can be obtained without passing through the most rigorous examinations, all are able and enlightened men. And as, moreover, they are taken from every class of society, they bring to the exercise of their duties the general spirit of the nation, while in that exercise, they contract habits of public business. This must be the system of every popular monarchy.

Every parish must, by the law of the land, have a school; and the paster or curate is, in virtue of his office, the inspector of this school; associated with whom is a committee of administration and of superintendence, composed of some of the most considerable persons of the parish, and called a committee of management of the school.

Thus we see that in Prussia, as in all the rest of Germany, the two first degrees of authority in primary instruction are in the hands of the cler-

gy; but above these two lowest steps, ecclesiastical influence is at an end, and the influence of the civil power comes in. The *Schulrath** makes the reports to the council, which decides by a majority. He inspects the schools, quickens and keeps alive the zeal of the school-inspectors, the school-committees, and the schoolmasters; all the correspondence of the parish inspectors and the superior inspectors is addressed to him.

To sum up all; primary instruction is parochial and departmental, and at the same time is subject to the minister of public instruction; which double character appears to me consequent on the very nature of establishments which equally require the constant superintendence of local powers, and the guidance of a superior hand, vivifying and harmonizing the whole.

It is now time to lay before you, in the greatest detail, each of the divisions of public instruction, after having indeavored to show you their relations to each other, and the springs by which they are guided. I shall begin with primary instruction.

* A civil, local officer.

SECTION II.

PRIMARY INSTRUCTION.

I shall place before you, in succession, the rules and the facts, that is to say—

I. The organization of primary instruction; the laws and regulations by which it is governed:

II. What the laws and regulations have actually produced, or the real state of primary instruction in Prussia.

TITLE I.

Duty of parents to send their children to the primary schools.

In Prussia, the state has long imposed on all parents the strict obligation of sending their children to school, unless they are able to prove that they are giving them a competent education at home. The two articles of the general code relating to this obligation are as follows:

"Art. 43. Every inhabitant who cannot, or will not, cause the needful instruction to be given to his children at home, is bound to send them to school from the age of five years.

"Art. 44. From that age no child shall omit going to school, nor absent himself from it for any length of time, unless under particular circum-

stances, and with the consent of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities."

A child who shall have gone through the whole course of elementary instruction before the age of fourteen, cannot be taken away from school by its parents without the permission of the committee, nor till after the members of the committee charged with the inspection of the school shall have proceeded to an examination of the pupil, which must be fully satisfactory as to morals and health.

"Care is every where to be taken to furnish necessitous parents with the means of sending their children to school, by providing them with the things necessary for their instruction, or with such clothes as they stand in need of."

"If, however, parents and masters neglect sending their children punctually to school, the clergymen must first explain to them the heavy responsibility which rests upon them; after that, the school-committee must summon them to appear before it, and address severe remonstrances to them. No excuse whatever shall be deemed valid (exclusive of the proof that the education of the child is otherwise provided for,) except certificates of illness signed by the medical man or the clergyman; the absence of the parents and masters which had occasioned that of the chil-

dren; or, lastly, the want of the necessary clothing, funds for providing which had not been forthcoming.

"If these remonstrances are not sufficient, coercive measures are then to be resorted to against the parents, guardians, or masters. The children are to be taken to school by an officer of the police, or the parents are to be sentenced to graduated punishments or fines: and in case they are unable to pay, to imprisonment or labor, for the benefit of the parish."

"The parents who shall have incurred such sentences shall be equally incapable of taking any part in the administration of the parish, or of holding any office connected with the church or the school."*

Title II.

Duty of each parish to maintain a primary school at its own cost.

"Every parish, however shall, is bound to have an elementary school, complete or incom-

* To the American people this law may seem to savor something of tyranny; but I sincerely think that there is no law more paternal. It is just, for where there is an obligation there is a right, and government has the inherent power to make and enforce such laws as will secure it rights. That parents are obligated to prepare their children for achieving or maintaining their civil liberty will not be disputed; and it is likewise as certain that there is no other preparation than a good education—an education that trains and cultivates the moral and religious feelings, and strengthens and enlightens

plete; that is to say, accomplishing the whole scheme of instruction prescribed by the law, or, at least the most indispensable parts of the scheme."

"Small towns, of less than fifteen hundred inhabitants, which cannot support the expense of a higher school, are bound to have at least elementary schools."

"Difference of religion alone ought not to be an obstacle to the formation of an association for a country school; but in forming such an association of catholics and protestants, regard must be had to the numerical proportion of the inhabitants of each communion. If it be possible, there shall, in this case, conjointly with the head master pro-

the intellect. The law is paternal, for it demands nothing but the best and greatest good of the subjects. There is nothing then in this school law of Prussia either despotic or tyrannic. Says a writer in the Foreign Quarterly Review, (No. XXIV.) "If children provided their own education, and could be sensible of its importance to their happiness, it would be a *want*, but as it is provided by the parents, and paid for by those who do not profit by its results, it is a *duty*, and is therefore liable to be neglected." If it is the duty of parents to educate their children, and if this duty is frequently neglected, would it be wrong for government to enact laws to secure its performance? A freeman must be an intelligent man, and this government, wise as it is, cannot secure the freedom of its subjects unless they are virtuous and intelligent. As parents intend their children to be members of this republic, which is based on intelligence, sustained by intelligence, and looks to intelligence for its protection and safeguard, they are under the most solemn obligations to make their children intelligent. To permit a son, unable to read, *and that understandingly*, to go to the polls, is as great an injury as parents can do their country.

fessing the faith of the majority, be a second master, professing that of the minority.

"Jews scattered about the country may enjoy all the advantages of the school-associations, but must not take part in their management. They must provide for the religious education of their children themselves."

We have now, Sir, seen the establishment of primary schools throughout Prussia. I shall proceed to show with what care and forethought the government which commands them has provided for their support. This is done in Title V. of the law of 1819. I give it with some few abridgements.

The law begins by defining what is required for the complete maintenance of a school, in order that it may answer its end.

"1. A suitable income for schoolmasters and mistresses, and a certain provision for them when they are past service.

"2. A building for the purposes of teaching and of exercise, properly laid out, kept in repair and warmed.

"3. Furniture, books, pictures, instruments, and all things necessary for the lessons and exercises.

"4. Pecuniary assistance for the necessitous scholars."

If you would have good masters, you must first of all insure them a maintenance. The Prussian law expresses itself on this head in the most solemn manner. "It is our firm will," says the king, in whose name it speaks, "that in the maintenance of every school, this be regarded as the most important object, and take precedence of all others."*

"The conditions which are essential in a school house, and must be rigidly enforced, are, a healthy situation, rooms of a sufficient size, well boarded, well aired, and kept with the greatest neatness, and, whenever it is possible, a good lodging for the master."

"Every school in a village or small town shall have a garden, cultivated according to the nature of the country, either as kitchen-garden, orchard, nursery-garden, or laid out for raising bees; and this garden shall be made available for the instruction of the scholars.

"Wherever the nature of the spot will admit,

* This is as it should be. Our unwillingness to pay an adequate compensation to those who are qualified, discourages young men from preparing themselves to teach. As soon as a good education is honored and rewarded in a teacher, acquisitions extensive and suitable will be made. Reward the profession of teaching as liberally as we do the profession of law or physic, and the teacher will be as liberal in his preparation as the lawyer or physician. If parents would have better teachers, they must be willing to pay better.

there shall be a gravelled plain or court, in front of the school, for the children's exercises.

"The materials necessary for instruction consist, above all, in a sufficient collection of books for the use of the master, and as many as possible for that of the scholars.

"There shall be, according to the degree of every school, a collection of maps and geographical instruments, models for drawing, writing, music, &c.; the instruments and collections necessary for studying mathematics and natural history; lastly, according to the extent of the system of instruction, there shall be the apparatus necessary for gymnastic exercises, and the tools and implements suited to the teaching of the mechanical arts or manufactures in the schools in which that branch of knowledge is introduced."*

Moreover, every school is bound to furnish gratuitously to poor scholars, books and other necessaries, a part of which shall be given to them as their own property, and part shall remain as belonging to the stock of the school.

But to meet the demands of a school established on these four bases, and embracing such a system of instruction, considerable funds are neces-

* How deficient are the school-houses of this country in the necessary apparatus!! And how unsuitable are their locations and structure!!

sary; and to raise these funds every variety of means presented by the local circumstances must be called into action. The following are the most general rules laid down by the law on that point.

"Schools or houses for education which possess funds arising from endowments, of whatever kind, shall be maintained, and if needful, improved out of these funds. In case they are insufficient, they shall have a right to assistance from other sources.

Title III.

General objects and different gradations of primary instruction.

"The elementary schools have for their object the regular development of the faculties of man, by more or less extended instruction in the branches of knowledge indispensable to the lower classes, both in town and country.

"The burgher schools bring the child to that point at which peculiar aptitude for classical studies, properly so called, or for some particular profession, may manifest itself.

"The gymnasia carry on education to the point at which boys, after having received a classical and liberal culture, enter on a course of practical studies in ordinary life, or scientific, superior and special, or professional studies at the universities.

"Establishments for girls must be, as much as possible, formed separately, corresponding, as to their course of instruction, to the elementary schools, or to the burgher schools. The general principles of instruction and discipline laid down for boys' schools are the same for girls', with modifications appropriate to their sex.

"Difference of religion in Christian schools necessarily produces some differences in the religious instruction. This instruction shall always be adapted to the spirit and the dogmas of the church to which the school belongs. But as, in every school of a Christian state, the dominant spirit, common to all modes of faith, ought to be piety and a profound reverence for God, every school may receive children of another communion.

"The first vocation of every school," says the law of 1819, "is, to train up the young in such a manner as to implant in their minds a knowledge of the relation of man to God, and at the same time to excite and foster both the will and the strength to govern their lives after the spirit and the precepts of Christianity. Schools must early train children to piety, and must therefore strive to second and complete the early instructions of the parent. In every school, therefore, the occupations of the day shall begin and end

with a short prayer and some pious reflections, which the master must contrive to render so varied and impressive that a moral exercise shall never degenerate into an affair of habit. Moreover the masters shall take care that the children punctually attend divine service on Sundays and holidays.

"Primary instruction shall have for its aim to develop the faculties of the soul, the reason, the senses and the bodily strength. It shall comprehend religion and morals, the knowledge of size and numbers, of nature and man; corporeal exercises, singing, and lastly, imitation of form, by drawing and writing.

"In every school for girls, without exception, the works peculiar to their sex shall be taught.

"Gymnastics shall be considered as a necessary part of a complete system of education, and shall be taught by simple rules favorable to the promotion of the health and bodily strength of children.

"Every complete elementary school necessarily comprehends the following objects:—

"1. Religious instruction, as a means of forming the moral character of children according to the positive truths of Christianity.

"2. The German language, and, in provinces where a foreign language is spoken, the

language of the country, in addition to the German.

"3. The elements of geometry, together with the general principles of drawing.

"4. Calculation and practical arithmetic.

"5. The elements of physics, geography, general history, and especially the history of Prussia.

"Care must be taken to introduce and combine these branches of knowledge with the reading and writing lessons, as much as possible, independently of the instruction which shall be given on those subjects specially.

"6. Singing; with a view to improve the voices of the children, to elevate their hearts and minds, to perfect and ennoble the popular songs and church music or psalmody.

"7. Writing and gymnastic exercises, which fortify all the senses, and especially that of sight.

"8. The simplest manual labors, and some instructions in husbandry, according to the agriculture of the respective parts of the country.

"The instructions in religion, reading, writing, arithmetic and singing are strictly indispensable in every school. No school shall be considered as a complete elementary school, unless it fulfil the whole scheme of instruction just marked out.*

* In Prussia every child, however humble, has the privilege of attending to every study that is mentioned in this li-

"The lesson-books shall be carefully selected by the school-committees, with the concurrence of the higher authorities, without whose approbation no book can be admitted. The ecclesiastical authorities are, in like manner, to be consulted on the choice of religious works.

"If there is a deficiency of elementary books in any branch of learning, the minister shall see that proper ones be written or compiled.*

beral course. In comparison to these how stinted and limited are the studies pursued in our primary schools! Yet the Americans suppose that they have the best schools and the best school system in the world! This liberal and wise programme should improve and enlarge the one introduced in our schools. Great thoroughness likewise is aimed at in all their schools; this is seen by an extract from page 287.

"Let solidity rather than extent, be aimed at, in the course of instruction. The young masters must know a few things fundamentally, rather than many things superficially. Vague and superficial attainments must be avoided at any rate. The steady continuous labor which must be gone through to know any thing whatsoever thoroughly, is an admirable discipline for the mind. Besides, nothing is so prolific as one thing well known; it is an excellent starting point for a thousand others. The final examinations must be mainly directed to the elements—they must probe to the bottom, they must keep solidity always in view."

How true is it that one thing well known is an excellent starting point for a thousand others! This important truth should be remembered by both teacher and scholar. The sum of our knowledge is not measured by the number of ideas we obtain, but by the number of relations which the new idea has to the knowledge already in the mind. Thus, one thing well known gives an invitation to, and helps in the acquisition of any thing else that may be desired. The mastery of one point, or of any one department of knowledge, is the best assistant pupils can have in making still higher and more difficult attainments.

* In this country neither the legislature nor the superintendent gives much attention to the books which are used in the schools.

"It will be the duty of the school-committees to inspect the methods adopted by the masters, and to aid them with their advice; they are never to tolerate a bad method; and they shall refer the matter to a higher authority if their advice is disregarded.

"Parents or guardians have a right to inquire into the system of education pursued in the school, and into the progress made by their children. They are bound to second the views of the masters, to fulfil all their obligations towards them, and to furnish the children with everything necessary for their studies.*

"It is essential to the general order that every pupil in every public school should be obliged to go through the whole course of fundamental instruction of the degree or stage to which that school belongs; and parents shall not be allowed to withhold a pupil at pleasure from any branch of instruction. Dispensations from any branch must be asked of the higher authorities, who will judge of the validity of the reasons.

"Institutions for the public instruction have a right to claim from all, even those who do not send their children to them, assistance and support wherever or whenever needed. All public

* Does not this part furnish some useful hints to American parents.

authorities are required to protect the public schools, each in his sphere of action, and to lend their aid to schoolmasters in the exercise of their functions, as to any other servants of the state.

"In all the parishes of the kingdom, without exception, the clergymen of every Christian communion shall seize every occasion, whether at church, or during their visits to schools, or in their sermons at the opening of classes, of reminding the schools of their high and holy mission, and the people of their duties towards the schools."*

Title IV.

The training of Primary Teachers.

The best plans of instruction cannot be executed except by the instrumentality of good teachers; and the state has done nothing for popular education, if it does not watch that those who devote themselves to teaching be well prepared; then suitably placed, encouraged and guided in the duty of continued self-improvement; and last-lastly, promoted and rewarded in proportion to

* There is a common ground which the clergy of all denominations may take; and I know of no other class of individuals who can do more for the improvement of our common schools, or for the moral and religious education of the children. The self-denying life of the school teacher, needs the countenance and sympathy of abler and higher instructors; and, also, the consolations of the spirit of christianity.

their advancement, or punished according to their faults.

OF THE TRAINING OF SCHOOLMASTERS.

"In order gradually to provide schools with masters of this character, the care of their training must not be abandoned to chance; the foundation of primary normal schools, must be continued. The expenses of these establishments shall be defrayed partly by the general funds of the state, and partly by the departmental funds for schools.*

"The principal aim of the primary normal schools should be to form men, sound both in body and mind, and to imbue the pupils with the sentiment of religion, and with that zeal and love for the duties of a schoolmaster which is so closely allied to religion.

"The course of instruction and exercises shall comprehend all the branches which, according to the present law, are to be taught in primary schools.

"With respect to methods of teaching, the en-

* After the Prussian government had organized her school system, placed over it competent and vigilant officers, and made it a legal duty for parents to send their children to school, she very wisely made provision for *the education of teachers*. There are forty-two Normal schools, or seminaries for teachers, in Prussia. In these schools, the candidates study three years before they are allowed to instruct.

deavor shall be, not so much to inculcate theories on the pupils, as to lead them by enlightened observation and their own experience to simple and lucid principles; and with this view, to the normal schools shall be attached others, in which the pupils may exercise themselves by practice.

"In each primary normal school the length of the course shall be three years, of which the first is devoted to supplemental primary instruction, the second to specific and more elevated studies, and the third to practice and occasional experiments in the primary school annexed, and in other schools of the place. When the supplemental instruction is not required, the course may be reduced to two years.

"Every pupil of a normal school receiving such allowance from the establishment, is obliged, at the expiration of the term, to accept the mastership to which the provincial consistories may appoint him; the prospect of advancement being, however, always set before him as the consequence of continued good conduct.*

"Every young man whose competency is admitted, shall receive a certificate, delivered and signed by the whole commission, his examiners,

* Prussia by law compels the students of the normal schools to make teaching their business. In this country, parents must be willing to *pay* enough to *secure* their services.

by their president, and by the head master of the primary normal school or other establishment in which he was trained to his calling. It must state his moral character, and his degree of aptitude for teaching. The certificates of capacity will therefore bear the title of 'excellent,' 'good or sufficient;' they should also specify and positively define the degree of fitness of the person, whether for the higher primary schools, or for those which are elementary. Such as prove incompetent shall, by a formal decree, be wholly rejected, or sent back to continue their studies.*

"The mistresses of public schools must equally give proof of their fitness for teaching, in examinations appointed by the provincial consistories." †

"It is the duty of the enlightened persons to

* The inspectors of our schools, forgetting the high duties of their office, and the honor of that profession of which they are the guardians, have sometimes acted upon the principle that a poor school is better than none, and the disqualified candidate has found no difficulty in obtaining his certificate. Many of the inspectors of our common schools are so lax and faithless that they present no obstacle to ignorance, and no measure for the discovery and encouragement of real merit. The moral character, the aptitude to teach, the ability to communicate knowledge, are seldom inquired into. A willingness to teach cheap makes the applicant desired by the district, and the inspectors, ready to compromise their ignorance with avarice, make no hesitation in giving the certificate.

† How criminally lenient are our inspectors in the examination of female teachers!

watch over the progress of the masters ia attainments."*

"Moreover, the provincial consistories shall choose ecclesiastics and inspectors, zealous and skilful in popular instruction, and shall induce them to form and direct grand associations of town and country schoolmasters, for the purpose of keeping alive a sense of the dignity and sanctity of their vocation, of continuing their own improvement by regular meetings, by consultations, conversations, practical essays, written thesis, dissertations on particular branches of tuition, by reading together well-selected works, and by the discussions to which they give rise.

"Able schoolmasters, who are faithful in their vocation and unremitting in self-improvement, shall be encouraged by promotion to places of a higher class, and even on particular occasions, by extraordinary rewards.

* The Prussian laws take great care to make *all* the citizens, the patrons and guardians of the *public schools*. In our country this is not done. Except in a few of our large cities, the leading intelligent men overlook the common school, and give all their attention to private schools, academies, colleges, and professional seminaries. The common school is left in the hands of the careless and the ignorant; and consequently the school is in a low, useless condition. It is shunned by the more wealthy and enlightened, who support private schools exclusively, for the education of their own children. But public schools should have the fostering care of the laws and of the leading citizens in this country, as well as in Prussia.

"The schoolmaster who, from indolence, carelessness, or bad disposition, neglects his occupation, instructs badly, or uses his power without discernment, shall be admonished first by the inspector of the school, and then by the inspector of the circle. If he does not amend, he shall be reported to the provincial authorities, who, on sufficient evidence, shall impose, amongst other penalties, and according to the income of the delinquent, progressive pecuniary fines, which shall be added to the funds of the school. If reprimands, threats, and punishments have no effect, his employment shall be taken from him.

"Those teachers who give scandal to their pupils, and to the inhabitants of their neighborhood, by their principles or conduct, in a moral, religious or political point of view, shall be deprived, as unworthy of office.

"Gross violations of modesty, temperance, moderation, or any open abuse of his authority as father, husband, or head of a family, shall be punished in a schoolmaster by the loss of his place."

Title V.

Of the Government of Primary Instruction.

Such is the general organization of primary instruction. But to suppose that this mechanism

will work of itself, is expecting too much from it and from human nature. It requires an administration whose eye and hand shall watch and animate the whole. I shall now proceed to lay before you the system of government set over primary instruction in Prussia. It has been of necessity referred to in the foregoing chapters, but this is the place for treating it in detail.

"No one shall refuse to become one of the managing school-committee.*

"The managing committees have cognizance of all school matters; the entire superintendence of such, both internally and externally, rests with them. All that belongs to the internal order of the school, as also to the superintendence and direction of the masters, should be the peculiar office of the ecclesiastical members of the managing committee; the pastor or curate of the village, who is one of this committee, is also the natural inspector of the school of the village, and shall visit the school frequently, and attend to the teachers. He takes part, too, in the external management and superintendence of the school.

"The efforts of these committees ought to be mainly directed to the organizing and maintaining of the schools conformably to the laws and

*This should be remembered by those who always have some excuse from the performance of this duty.

regulations, so that they may accomplish their end: with which view, they shall advise, direct, and support the teachers, try to make the inhabitants of the parish love their schools, excite their interest and their zeal, and finally strive to remove the coarseness and ignorance of the country youth.

"Each managing committee shall meet every three months, on a stated day, and as often besides as may be needful, to deliberate on the concerns intrusted to it.

"They shall also, if advised by the ecclesiastical member specially charged with the superintendence of the school, summon the master to attend any of their meetings, and to give his opinion on the affairs of his school.

"All the committees and commissioners of town schools shall be confirmed by the provincial consistories. These are bound to exercise vigilant care that none be admitted but upright judicious men, zealous for the good cause of education, and esteemed by their fellow-citizens.

"The authority of the school-commissions extends over all the schools of each town, which they shall preserve in harmony one with the other.

"Throughout the whole extent of their jurisdiction, their duty is,—

"1.) To take care that the town be provided with the necessary schools of different degrees, and properly connected with each other:

"2.) To inquire into the wants of the schools, and the means of supplying them, and to assist in the assessments and collection of the rates or loans of the householders:

"3.) To make themselves well acquainted with the state of all the school-funds and revenues, general as well as particular:

"4.) To take charge of the general fund of the schools of the town:

"5.) To enforce the execution of whatever is ordained by the law, the minister, or the provincial consistories, in order to secure proper instruction to all children of an age to go to school, and to prevent even the poorest among them from growing up neglected and without education, in beggary and all the vices which idleness begets and fosters.

"6.) To apply themselves diligently to the improvement of the schools, and to animate the zeal of their fellow citizens; to offer suggestions on this subject to the magistrates and town-authorities, and enable them, from exact information on all that relates to the schools of the place, to judge

*The local guardians of our schools may be reminded here of many omissions of their duty.

correctly of their wants, and of the best means of supplying them; to keep alive the zeal of the teachers, and give them advice and direction."

The points, Sir, which I have now gone over in succession, embrace the entire organization of primary instruction in Prussia.

It is impossible not to be struck with its profound wisdom. No inapplicable general principles, no spirit of system, no partial or exclusive views govern the legislator. He avails himself of all the means that can conduce to his end, however widely these means may differ. It is a king, and an absolute king, who issued this law; it is an irresponsible minister who advised or who digested it; and yet we find no injudicious spirit of centralization or of official despotism; almost every thing is left to the parochial, departmental, or provincial authorities; little more than the general supervision and direction are reserved to the minister. The clergy have a great share in the management of popular instruction, and householders are also consulted in the towns and villages. In a word, all persons or classes who have an interest in the subject, find their appropriate place in this organization, and concur, each in his own manner and degree, to the common end, which is, the civilization of the people.

The greatest difficulty was to obtain from the

new provinces, and particularly those on the Rhine, so recently annexed to the monarchy, the execution of that article of the law which imposes on parents, under severe penalties, the obligation of sending their children to school. The ministry had the wisdom to suspend this part of the law in these provinces, and to labor to bring about the same results by persuasion and zeal. When the taste for instruction had been thus gradually diffused, and the population of these provinces appeared sufficiently prepared for such a measure, the law was rendered obligatory. This took place in 1825, and from that moment it has been steadily and rigorously enforced.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN PRUSSIA.

Christianity ought to be the basis of the instruction of the people; we must not flinch from the open profession of this maxim; it is no less politic than it is honest. We baptize our children, and bring them up in the christian faith and in the bosom of the church; in after-life, age, reflection, the breath of human opinions, modify their early impressions, but it is good that these impressions should have been made by christianity. *Popular education ought therefore to be religious, that is to say, christian; for, I repeat it, there is no such thing as religion in general;*

in Europe, and in our days, religion means christianity. Let our popular schools then be christian; let them be so entirely and earnestly. By degrees the clergy will open their eyes, and will lend us efficacious assistance.

We have abundant proof that the well-being of an individual, like that of a people, is nowise secured by extraordinary intellectual powers or very refined civilization. The true happiness of an individual, as of a people, is founded on strict morality, self-government, humility, and moderation; on the willing performance of all duties to God, his superiors, and his neighbors.

A religious and moral education is consequently the first want of a people. Without this, every other education is not only without real utility, but in some respects dangerous. If, on the contrary, religious education has taken firm root, intellectual education will have complete success, and ought on no account to be withheld from the people, since God has endowed them with all the faculties for acquiring it, and since the cultivation of all the powers of man secures to him the means of reaching perfection, and, through that supreme happiness.

Religious and moral instruction, far from leading to presumption and a disputatious spirit, on the contrary, produces in man a consciousness of

his weakness, and, as a consequence, humility. The object then should be, to give the people solid and practical knowledge, suited to their wants, which will naturally refine and soften their habits and manners.

If such be the instruction the people ought to receive, that of the masters of the primary schools is at once determined, and the principles to be followed in the instruction of our pupils are equally clear.

A more definite direction is given to religious and moral instruction by the belief in the revealed word of God in the Holy Scriptures. But this belief must not be simply historical, as amongst the learned; nor amuse itself with obscure and mystical notions; nor be expressed with affectation, in word, gesture, or deed. It ought rather so to penetrate the heart of man as to produce a constant endeavor to have his thoughts, sentiments, and actions in strictest harmony with the word of God. It is, then, on the living conviction of the truths and doctrines of christianity, that we base the religious and moral character of our pupils.*

* Unless christianity, the truths of the Bible, are made the basis of all instruction, universal education will be of little benefit. The New Testament should be introduced in all our schools: not as an easy-lesson-book, as the practice now is, that the younger children may *learn to read*, but as a book of

STATISTICS OF PRIMARY INSTRUCTION.

SIR,

You are now acquainted with the organization of primary instruction in the kingdom of Prussia. You know what are the legal duties of parents, and those of parishes; what the general objects of education, in the two different degrees into which primary instruction is divided; what the mode of recruiting, of appointing, and training masters; the system of superintendence, and the various authorities to which it is confided; in a word, you know the law. It is now time to

morals and duties, and as containing a complete system of ethics. It is frequently said that education gives men greater power to injure others, and that it increases instead of diminishes crime; and therefore since an education by depraved human nature is most likely to be used as a means of doing evil, the instruction of the people and the diffusion of knowledge are not desirable. Now, it is true that the instruments which we use to obtain knowledge, reading, writing, cyphering, &c.—in themselves have no moral characters, and there is too, a kind of knowledge, which in itself is neither good nor bad. For example, a knowledge of the science of numbers will be as ready and as efficient in assisting the rogue as the honest man; as a knife may serve the assassin, as well as him who cuts a piece of bread with it for a crippled beggar. There are splendid, gigantic intellects which are a curse to the world. The more an evil disposed, perverted mind knows, the more it is to be dreaded, and it is undoubtedly true that an education without religious instruction, and an entire neglect of the cultivation of the heart, leads to moral mischief, rather than to individual happiness, and good. Something more must be done than merely to give the people the means by which they acquire knowledge; they must be prepared and disposed to make a right use of knowledge. We must not only enlighten the intellect, but we must train and educate the moral and the religious feelings of the heart.

enter upon details: you possess a tolerably complete idea of the external mechanism of popular instruction; you have still to learn what this mechanism has produced; that is to say,—

1. How many primary schools, elementary and burgher, there are in Prussia; how many children attend them; how many masters are employed, and what are their salaries.

2. How many primary normal schools there are, and what they cost.

I will endeavor, with the aid of official documents to establish these statistics of primary instruction in Prussia.

A kingdom which has not thirteen millions of inhabitants, annually pays for primary instruction (not including the primary normal schools, which are not noticed here) nearly 300,000*l*, a considerable sum, to which the state contributes the inconsiderable portion of 22,000*l*. This is the happy result of the strict observance of the two following points, without which there can be, in my opinion, no popular education. 1st, An obligation on all parents to pay something towards the instruction of their children, unless they can prove extreme poverty: 2nd, An obligation upon every parish to support the schoolmaster out of its own funds, in addition to the money paid by those children whose parents can afford it, except

the said parish can prove its real inability to do so.

At the end of 1825, the minister of public instruction caused a new census of the number of primary schools, and of the number of the masters who were employed therein, to be made, as in 1819.

Elementary schools for town and country, ordinarily for both sexes together,	20,887
In which were employed—	
Masters,	22,261
Mistresses,	704
Total,	22,965

to which must be added 2,024 assistants.

"Now we have reckoned the total population of children from 7 to 14 years of age, in the whole monarchy, at 1,923,200. It follows, then, from the foregoing calculations, that out of every fifteen children, thirteen actually attend the public schools; and as we have to allow for those who go to private schools, or who receive instruction at their fathers' houses, or who have perhaps already entered the lower classes of the gymnasia, the general state of things appears sufficiently gratifying.

According to the latest census, the population of Prussia is 12.726,823. Out of this popula-

tion, it was estimated in 1831, that 4,767,072 were children of from one day to fourteen years old.

This total sum is founded on the several sums returned by each province and each regency of Prussia in Table III. hereto annexed.

In Prussia the age fixed by the law for going to school is from 7 to 14, inclusive; and I must here take occasion to remark the extreme utility of having a legal age for education. People are thus accustomed to regard a portion of their lives as necessarily set apart for learning.

It is a rule of statistics that, calculating the relative mortality of the several ages, out of a hundred children of from one day to fourteen years, those between seven and fourteen form three-sevenths, which gives, out of every hundred, about forty-three of age to go to school, (or, to give the minutest fractions, 42,857 in 100,000,) and, consequently in Prussia, 2,043,030 children of the 4,767,072 composing the total population of children from a day to fourteen years old.—Hence it follows, that if we find that there are in fact 2,043,030 children in the schools of Prussia, we may be certain that there does not exist a single human being throughout that monarchy who does not receive an education sufficient for the moral and intellectual wants of the laborious

classes. This were indeed an admirable result, and one which would raise to a high pitch of distinction the system of primary instruction which had produced it. Now this result, glorious and admirable as it is, is an incontestible fact. I have under my eyes, and the Table No. III. already cited exhibits, regency by regency, and province by province, the actual number of children, who, according to the accurate calculation of the attendance-lists, frequented the public primary schools in the year 1831; and this number is 2,021,421 children

The difference is therefore only 21,609 between the real and the normal number.

This difference is very slight, and even this will vanish if we take into account the following considerations.

1. These calculations are founded only on the public primary schools, and do not include the private ones, which, though not very numerous, still contain a good number of children, especially in the large towns, and in the more backward provinces, in which the whole dignity of public education is not yet felt.

2. No account is likewise taken of the children educated at home, which would include the greater part of the children of the higher classes.

3. Neither are the boys belonging to the low-

er classes of the gymnasia reckoned, almost all of whom are under fourteen years of age; and whose number, in the hundred and ten gymnasia of the monarchy, amounted, in the course of the summer of 1832, to 17,935, while the two higher classes amounted to only 5,848.

Taking into account these three new elements, it is clear that not only the number of children under fourteen who receive, in one way or another the benefits of education, is equal to the normal number of the three-sevenths of the population, but that it must actually exceed that number. This remarkable circumstance can be explained only by a supposition which we shall presently see borne out by indisputable fact, namely, that in the most civilized provinces of Prussia, in those of Saxony and Brandenburg for instance, the taste for instruction is so generally diffused that parents anticipate the age fixed by law for sending their children to school. We have here, I repeat, arrived at a result truly admirable; and with the guarantees for its accuracy which I have pointed out, a result above all suspicion or uncertainty. We must regard it under its most important aspects.

Lastly, if we wish to compare the leading results of these statistical documents with those of

the documents of 1819 and 1825, we shall find that,

1st, In 1819 the number of schools was, in all, ...	20,085
In 1825	21,623
In 1831	22,612
2nd, In 1819 the number of school-masters and mistresses was	21,895
In 1825	22,965
In 1831	27,749
In 1825 the number of children under fourteen years of age was ..	4,487,461
That of children from seven to fourteen	1,923,200
That of children attending school,	1,664,218
In 1831 the total number of children under fourteen was	4,767,072
Out of which, the number between seven and fourteen was	2,043,030
Out of which, the number of children attending school was	2,021,421

Note.—The extracts have been full, that the reader may not only have the most important parts of the volume before him, but also, that a comparison might be made between our own school system, and the school system of Prussia. Important practical hints, both to legislators and teachers, have been suggested, for like the patriotic Cousin, who beautifully remarked, "it is of Prussia I write, but of France I think." I have wished to do justice to the Report, but at the same time it was of the good of our schools and school systems that I thought.

THE NEW-YORK COMMON SCHOOL SYSTEM.

[The following exposition of our school system is from the last annual report of the Superintendent of Common Schools, made to the legislature January 6th, 1836. It is a lucid, brief view of the organization of this system; and like all the writings from our Superintendent should be read, and re-read by every citizen.—Ed.]

The common school system in this state has attracted much attention in other states, and indeed, in other countries. Yet its organization has not always been clearly understood by those who have viewed it at a distance, nor have the principles, which enter into the administration of its affairs, always been justly apprehended. In both these respects, it may present, upon a closer inspection, a different aspect. It is possible that some of those who have constant opportunities of noticing it, have not always the most accurate conception either of the theoretical considerations which belong to the subject, or of the moral influences which so largely contribute to continue the system in force. On all these points, correct

views are extremely desirable. Without them, indeed, it is impossible justly to appreciate its excellencies or to devise the proper remedies for its acknowledged defects.

It is proposed to present in this report a general view of the operation of the system, in as brief a manner as is consistent with a correct comprehension of its various, and in some degree, complex relations; indicating as far as possible, the particulars in which the results obtained have fallen short of the objects contemplated in its institution.

Superintendence.

The secretary of state is, by virtue of his office, superintendent of common schools.

His duties are:

1. To submit to the legislature an annual report, exhibiting the condition of the common school fund, and of the schools, and all such matters relating to his office and the schools as he may deem expedient to communicate.

2. To apportion the income of the common school fund among the several towns and cities of the state. The apportionment is made according to the ratio of their population, compared with the population of the whole state. The census is taken once in ten years by act of congress,

and on every alternate fifth year by the state, so that a new apportionment is made once in five years. When a new town is created, an apportionment is made between it and the towns from which it was formed according to the best evidence in the power of the superintendent. The basis, which he has been accustomed to assume in such cases, is the number of children between the ages of five and sixteen years, residing within each portion of the divided territory. As the children are annually enumerated in every town, it affords the most ready criterion for determining the amount of money which the several parts of the territory in question should receive; and on the score of equity, is as free from objection as the ratio of population. To this standard, however, all such cases must be brought after the next ensuing census is taken.

3. To prepare suitable forms and regulations, for making all reports, and conducting all proceedings, under the title of the statutes relating to common schools, and to transmit them, "with such instructions as he shall deem necessary and proper for the better organization and government of common schools," to the officers concerned in the administration of the system.

Under this provision a very important question has arisen—whether it confers on the superinten-

dent authority to give his advice or directions as to the course of study to be pursued, or the books to be used in common schools. The present superintendent, and his predecessor in office, have acted upon the assumption that it was not intended to confer such power; and in this construction of the law, they are supported by an opinion expressed by the committee of literature of the senate of this state, in the year 1825, as the result of an investigation growing out of an act of a former superintendent, done under a different view of the subject. Under these circumstances, the superintendent would certainly not feel justified in attempting to exert such an authority, if his own opinion were in favor of his right to do so.

The authority of directing the course of study to be pursued in the common schools, is a very delicate and responsible one, and it ought not to be exercised unless it is given in express terms. To give "instructions for the better organization and government of common schools," might seem at first glance to include such an authority; but this construction is hardly to be reconciled with the fact that the statute has, in a subsequent article, as will be hereafter seen, placed in other hands the right to direct "the course of studies" to be pursued in the common schools, unless it be

upon the supposition that the power was designed to be concurrent, in which case it is natural to presume, that it would have been conferred in both instances in the same terms.

4. The superintendent has an appellate jurisdiction in all matters of appeal arising under the statute relating to common schools. The supreme court has said that any person conceiving himself aggrieved concerning any "matter under the present title, (which includes the whole of the school act,) may appeal to the *superintendent* of common schools, whose decision shall be final. This provision was intended for what it practically is, a cheap and expeditious mode of settling most, if not all of the difficulties and disputes arising in the course of the execution of the law. A *common law certiorari* would no doubt lie from this court, to the trustees [of a school district] to bring up and correct any erroneous proceeding not concluded by an adjudication of the superintendent, or in a case where his powers were inadequate to give the relief to which the party was entitled."

This construction is in accordance with the terms of the statute, which are very broad, and were probably designed to give him the power of putting at rest all controversies arising in the administration of the system of which he has the

supervision. His decision in all matters
peal is final, and every case brought befo
is disposed of without expense to the part
cepting such as is incurred in the prepar
their papers, which are, however, always
ed without regard to form, if they are in su
correct. Although the superintendent ha
tensive a jurisdiction in matters of appeal
vil courts are open to persons conceivin
selves aggrieved; but as litigation in th
is expensive, the cheaper remedy is
sought, and the duty of determining th
presented to him, becomes the most impo
well as the most arduous, of his duties.
cases, the whole law connected with taxa
with the elective suffrage, and the great
of questions arising under it, modified by
cial provisions of the statute relating to
mon schools, are frequently involved, an
sponsibility as a judicial officer is great,
as regards a knowledge of the establish
rule in a given case, but as respects the
ty of its application to the state of facts
to him.

In conferring this jurisdiction on th
having charge of the common schools,
ing object was to provide for the regula
tion of the laws by which the system is

apd, and for a prompt settlement of all questions hinrising under them. When it is considered that , exve have more than ten thousand school districts, on cnd that every disputed question is liable to be ceivrought, and is in fact, almost always brought beancore him for a decision, it must be manifest that o eme constant attendance of the superintendent is ie cecessary at the seat of government. In this part hen the administration of the system, he can derive ourb aid from subordinates, excepting in registering uall s letters and orders. His post is essentially jucascial, and all his decisions must be pronounced nt, a himself. If he had the power of visiting the theshools for the purpose of inquiring into their n anndition, he could not carry into effect the intenarieon with which it would be given, or, if he did, e sp would be followed with very inconvenient re- corlts. No individual could inspect more than his ree schools per day, and at this rate the whole t on mber in the state could not be examined in less legan ten years by the same person. To withopriaw the superintendent for six months from his sentfice, for any purpose, would throw upon him ch an accumulation of business as would leave officm in arrear for the residue of the year. In the lea an time the interests of the schools would maexcially suffer, for want of the necessary authiover to put controversies at rest. These controver-

sies might be carried into the civil courts, but great expenses are usually incurred, and in the majority of cases, litigation in the courts for the very reason that it involves pecuniary loss to some of the parties, is fatal to the harmony of the district, in which it occurs, long after the controversy itself is disposed of by a judicial decision.

The welfare of the common schools, therefore, imperiously requires that the superintendent should not be disturbed in the discharge of this part of his duty, by any arrangement incompatible with it.

The existing mode of disposing of disputed questions arising under the common school laws, has proved convenient in practice. If it has any defect, it is, that the superintendent has no power by law to enforce the execution of his own decisions. They are, it is true, generally submitted to, without objection; but cases have occurred in which the proper officers have wholly refused to carry them into execution. There is a case in which the commissioners of common schools of a town, acting under the advice of a legal man, who is aware of this defect in the law, have for two years wholly neglected and refused to pay over to a school district a sum of money which is equitably due to it, and to which it has become legally entitled under a decision of the superintendent.

The district has no alternative but to submit to the injury, or to incur the expense of an application to the supreme court for a mandamus to compel the payment. The amount due is inconsiderable, and the remedy is surrounded with so many inconveniences as to amount to nearly a complete denial of justice.

Commissioners of Common Schools.

Three persons are appointed under this title at the annual meeting in each town. Their duties are to regulate the boundaries of the school districts within the towns for which they are chosen, to alter existing districts and form new ones when it becomes necessary for the convenience of the inhabitants. They receive from the county treasurer, with whom it is deposited, the quota of the revenue of the common school fund, to which the town is entitled, and from the collector of the town the equal amount raised upon its taxable property; and they apportion these sums among the school districts of the town according to the number of children over five and under sixteen years of age, residing in each district, provided a school has been kept in it three months, by a qualified teacher, during the preceding year, and provided also the school moneys received in that year, have been applied

to the compensation of such teacher. They receive the annual reports of the trustees of the school districts, and from them prepare a consolidated report, setting forth certain particulars specified in the statute to be transmitted to the superintendent.

There is a defect in the statute in relation to the commissioners of common schools, which requires some legal remedy. In many cases these officers receive for distribution to the common schools, from $1,000 to $1,500. The only security which the public has for a faithful execution of the trust, is their personal integrity. In most cases this proves a sufficient safeguard. But it is not so in all. During the last three years it has repeatedly happened, that a commissioner has absconded with school moneys to a considerable amount in his hands, and the entire loss has fallen upon the school districts. Ought not these officers to give bonds for the faithful application of the funds confided to them? The general policy of the law is to exact such security whenever a pecuniary trust is delegated. Town collectors are required to give bonds for the faithful execution of their duties. Constables are required to give bonds conditioned for the payment over of all moneys collected by them. The collector of a school district, whenever a warrant is deliver-

ed to him for the collection of moneys, may be required by the trustees to execute a bond, conditioned for the faithful execution of his duties; and it is exceedingly rare that he has in his hands as great an amount of money as the commissioners. Why should the latter be exempt from providing the same security, which is exacted from other individuals executing pecuniary trusts, and which, as repeated examples of defalcation have shown, is necessary to render the application of the school moneys to their proper objects certain? It is respectfully submitted to the legislature, whether the commissioners of common schools in each town, should not be required immediately after their election, to appoint one of their number to receive all the public moneys and pay them out to the districts, the individual so appointed to be deemed the treasurer of the board, and to give bonds for the faithful execution of his duties. The other two would not be required to give bonds, nor would they incur any pecuniary responsibility. Should such a provision be made, the security to be given might be, like the town collector's bond, approved by the supervisor, and filed, like the constable's bond, in the office of the town clerk.

Inspectors of Common Schools.

Three inspectors of common schools are annually chosen in each town. Their duties are to examine all persons offering themselves as candidates for teaching common schools in the town; to visit all the common schools at least once in each year; and they may "give their advice and direction to the trustees and teachers of such schools, as to the government thereof, and the course of studies to be pursued therein."

The commissioners of common schools have, by virtue of their office, the same powers, so that there are always six persons in each town authorized to act as inspectors.

In the examination of a candidate for teaching, if the inspectors are satisfied that he is qualified with respect to moral character, learning and ability, they give him a certificate. He is then a qualified teacher for one year, unless his certificate is previously annulled on a re-examination, which the inspectors may require if they deem it necessary. So long as he holds a certificate dated within one year, he may receive the public money as a compensation in whole or in part for his services. Trustees of school districts may employ a teacher who has not been inspected, or who on an examination, has not been deemed qualified by the inspectors; but no such teacher can re-

ceive any portion of the public money for his wages.

All examinations must be made at a regular meeting called for the purpose, and attended by at least three inspectors.

It must be manifest on the slightest consideration, that the success of the common school system, so far as concerns the great ends of education, will depend in a higher degree on the inspectors than on any other class of officers connected with its administration. With them it lies to fix the standard of qualification for teachers, and thus to determine the amount of ability, which the latter shall bring to their tasks. If the requirements of the inspectors are small, the qualifications of the teachers will, as a general rule, be slender, and to these the standard of education in the town will gradually conform. In practice, the rule has perhaps been reversed. The inspectors have usually, in granting certificates, been influenced by the state of education in the town, and have thus conformed to an existing standard, instead of establishing a new one of a higher grade. The superintendent has therefore uniformly urged upon the inspectors the importance of assuming a high standard of qualification, and of requiring all candidates to be tried by it. That this duty is not always properly dis-

charged is not to be disguised. Inspectors have sometimes given a certificate of qualification to a teacher for a summer school, and at the expiration of the term, annulled it upon the ground that he was incompetent to teach a winter-school, which is usually attended by a larger proportion of older scholars. This distinction is wholly unauthorized by law, and whenever an opportunity has offered, it has been condemned in pointed terms. It is no hardship to adopt, in all cases, the highest standard of requirement. School districts, it is true, are often of very small pecuniary ability; but in order to entitle a school district to a share of the income of the common school fund, the statute demands only that a qualified teacher shall be annually employed for three months. It does not even require that a school shall be kept by any teacher for a longer period. There is no school district, which is not capable of complying with this rule, even if a teacher of undoubted qualifications were in all cases to be required. Inspectors should, therefore, aim to advance the standard of requirement for teachers as much as possible. Without their aid opinion may do something, but it is in their power, by setting up a higher rule of qualification, and enforcing a strict conformity to it in every case, to elevate the character of the common schools, to a

grade which would leave little else to be desired. As will be seen in another part of this report, ample provision has recently been made by law for the education of teachers, and the inspectors may, in the manner above suggested, become in an eminent degree instrumental in securing employment for them.

There is another part of their duty of equal importance in its consequences, if it is faithfully and efficiently discharged. They are authorized to give "their advice and direction," "as to the course of studies to be pursued" in the common schools. This is a power involving in its exercise the greatest responsibility: and although it might be limited by a narrow construction of the law, to a right to direct the order in which the particular studies chosen by some other authority should be pursued, it can hardly be taken, when viewed in connexion with the other provisions of the statute in relation to the inspectors, in so restricted a sense. Indeed the phrase "course of studies" in its technical acceptation must be understood as comprehending a particular series of subjects, and the particular order in which they are to be studied. Certain it is, that the inspectors have in some towns taken upon themselves to direct the studies to be pursued in the common schools within their jurisdiction; and

in one case an application was made to the Superintendent to define the limits of their authority, both with respect to the course of studies and the selection of school books; the inspectors having in the case referred to given their direction to the teacher on both those points. The matter was not brought before him in the shape of an appeal, and no decision was pronounced upon it: but with the consideration he had given to it, he was at the time strongly inclined to a construction of the law in favor of the right of the inspectors to direct the teachers of common schools within their jurisdiction as to the particular subjects, which should be taught. With regard to the right of the inspectors to direct what class books shall be studied in the common schools, he would have entertained but little doubt. This is manifestly a larger power than that of determining what subjects of study shall be taught. To direct a particular class book to be used, not only prescribes the subject of which it treats, but includes a specification of the extent to which it shall be studied, and in some degree also the mode in which it shall be taught—for the manner in which a subject is treated is often the most essential part of the treatise, so far as it is a vehicle of instruction. The power of prescribing class books, has not been given in express terms,

nor is it perceived that it can be derived by implication from any of the powers delegated by law to the officers concerned in the supervision or managemement of the common schools. But with respect to subjects of study, the case is entirely different. The language of the law seems to sanction the construction which gives to the inspectors authority to direct what they shall be; and it is consistent with the other important division of their duties, which includes the examination of teachers, and determines their ability to give instruction in particular branches or subjects. The latter being fixed, the examination would have reference to them, and the standard of requirement be settled according to a just and uniform rule.

The exercise of the authority to direct teachers as to the subjects of study to be taught, is a very delicate and responsible duty; and, if it be wisely executed, it cannot fail to exert a most beneficial influence upon the common schools. But if the authority of the inspectors were restricted to the mere examination of teachers, they might make it highly efficient as an instrument of advancing the standard of education. They might decline to grant a teacher a certificate, unless he was qualified to give instruction in the branches or subjects which, in their opinion, ought to be

taught in the common schools. Indeed, such is their duty now; and independently of the obligation of performing it fearlessly and faithfully, there is, as has been already shown, no hardship in its performance, with respect to any of those who come within the sphere of their authority.

Trustees of School Districts.

In each school district, there are annually chosen three trustees, whose duty it is, to call special meetings of the inhabitants whenever they deem it necessary; to make out all tax lists, when taxes are voted by the inhabitants of the district to build or repair the school-house; to provide fuel or to purchase a lot for a school-house; to make out all rate bills [tuition bills] from the lists kept by the teachers; to exempt indigent persons from the payment of their proportion of such rate-bills; to have the custody of the district school-house; to contract with and employ all teachers, and to provide for the payment of their wages in the manner already explained under the head of "expenses."

The trustees of school districts are the immediate representatives of the inhabitants; and as they owe their election to them, they may be considered as controlled by the public opinion of the districts in the discharge of their duty, so far as

the law has left them any discretion as to the manner of performing it. They are charged with the management of the principal internal affairs of the district, and as the inhabitants residing within it pay more than three quarters of all the expenses of the school, the law has virtually deposited with them the control of almost all that concerns it. With respect to the formation of school districts, and the regulation of their boundaries, a different principle prevails. The commissioners of common schools, in whom this authority is vested, are town officers; they are chosen by the suffrages of all the electors, and though they may be said to be accountable to all the districts, the voters for town officers being composed substantially of the voters in school districts, they cannot be considered as controlled by the opinion of any particular district when it is at variance with others, in matters connected with the discharge of their duties. The same principle prevails with regard to the election of inspectors. They also are town officers, and the law has very properly confided the duty of pronouncing upon the qualification of teachers, and directing the course of studies to be pursued in the common schools, to individuals who, from the manner in which they are chosen, are not directly accountable to the inhabitants of any particular district. To return

to trustees of school districts. Although the law has given them certain powers, the successful exercise of some of those powers must depend on its accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants. Thus the trustees have the absolute right of employing all teachers. But if they were to engage an individual, who for any reason was obnoxious to the inhabitants, the latter might refuse to send their children to school, and thus subject the trustees to some embarrassment in providing for the payment of his wages. They might, it is true, pay him the public money; but as this would soon be exhausted, they would be obliged to collect the residue of those persons who sent their children to school, and the greater part of the burden would fall upon the trustees themselves, and the few who should favor their views. Under the Prussian system, this result could not happen, as all parents are required by law to send their children to school. The spirit of our common school system, is to refer almost all matters relating to the districts, which are of an internal or domestic character, to the inhabitants themselves; and from the organization of the districts, the powers of the trustees are necessarily exercised, so far as any discretion is admissible, in subordination to the opinion of the district. But where the law has prescribed positive rules for

their government, those rules are, of course, to be obeyed, even though such obedience were to conflict with the wishes of the inhabitants.

It is proper to add in this place that, at the annual meeting of the inhabitants of each district, a collector and a clerk are chosen together with the trustees.

The duty of the collector is to collect and pay over to the trustees the amount of all tax-lists and rate-bills delivered to him for the purpose. The trustees may, before delivering to him any warrant for the collection of moneys, require him to give a bond, in double the amount of the sum to be collected, conditioned for the faithful execution of his duties.

The duty of the clerk is to keep a record of all the proceedings of the district, to give notice of the time and place for all meetings of the inhabitants, and to keep and preserve all books, &c. belonging to his office.

Under a law passed at the last session of the legislature, authorizing the inhabitants of school districts to purchase district libraries, a librarian may also be chosen at the annual meeting.

Inhabitants of School Districts.

In addition to the right of annually choosing officers for their respective districts, the inhabi-

tants have power by a majority of votes to designate a site for the district school-house, and to lay taxes on the taxable property of the district to purchase a district library, and a suitable book case, to purchase or lease a site for a school-house, to build, hire or purchase such school-house, to keep it in repair, and to furnish it with necessary fuel and appendages. By the construction given to this part of the statute by the superintendent, the term "appendages" is limited to a few simple articles, which are indispensable to the comfort and health of the pupils, such as a broom, a water-pail, a stove, a wood-house, &c. The inhabitants have no power to tax themselves, excepting for these enumerated objects, and whenever it is desired to raise money for any other purpose, it must be done by voluntary contribution.

The standard of qualification for voters is so low, that scarcely any individual is excluded from the exercise of the right of suffrage in respect to matters concerning the school-district in which he resides. If he has been assessed in the town to work on the highway during the year or the preceding year, he may vote at school-district meetings for any authorized object. He has a voice in the choice of district officers, and though wholly destitute of property himself, he may contribute to lay a tax on the property of the district.

In some cases, therefore, property may be taxed for common school purposes against the wishes of its posessors; but as the objects of taxation are extremely limited, no danger is likely to arise from the abuse of this power. In the case of school-houses, always the greatest object of expenditure, there is a further safeguard: no tax exceeding four hundred dollars can be voted for that object, unless the commissioners of common schools of the town certify that a larger sum is necessary. The tax for purchasing libraries is limited to twenty dollars the first year, and to ten dollars per annum for subsequent additions to it; and all other taxes must, from the nature of the objects, be small in amount.

The effect of these provisions with respect to taxation in school districts in most cases, is, that the inhabitants tax themselves liberally for all the authorized objects referred to.

There is one particular in which the same praise is not so generally due. It is the case of all others, in which a suitable liberality is most necessary to accomplish the objects of the system, and in which the greatest want of it has heretofore been shown. The school-houses are usually comfortable and the physical wants of the scholars are sufficiently provided for. But with respect to their moral and intellectual improve-

ment, there is in general a great deficiency. The only material defect of the system is the want of competent teachers. The cause of the defect is an unwillingness on the part of the inhabitants to pay such wages as to secure the services of individuals of suitable qualifications. That much of the prevailing apathy on this subject is owing to the want of attention to its importance, will hardly be denied. Our common school system has been but a few years in operation, and it is only recently that it can be considered as having gained a solid foundation. In building up and bringing to perfection its external organization, the internal condition of the schools has been in some degree neglected.

Public attention has, within the last eight years, been more strongly attracted to this part of the system, and in many districts correct views begin to prevail with regard to the impolicy of expending money unprofitably upon incompetent teachers. To the exertions of individuals to correct erroneous impressions on this subject, the countenance and co-operation of the legislature have been superadded. By an act passed in the year 1834, the Regents of the University were authorized to appropriate a portion of the income of the literature fund to the education of teachers. This authority was promptly exercised, as will

be hereafter seen, and the plan adopted by the regents has been carried into execution. So long as the wages of teachers were extremely low, men of talents would not devote themselves to the business of teaching, nor could they afford to fit themselves for it by a regular course of preparation. The rate of compensation for teachers is gradually advancing: in some parts of the state, good wages are paid, and many individuals are preparing themselves for teaching as a permanent vocation. As they find employment, the demand for them will increase: for as the benefits of instruction by a well trained teacher become apparent, the influence of the example will extend to neighboring districts; and these causes acting reciprocally upon each other, cannot fail to produce important effects.

The legislature has done all that can be accomplished by legislation to promote the cause of common school education, excepting by a resort to compulsory enactments. The spirit of our institutions is adverse to measures of this description. The success of the common school system has been mainly accomplished by arguments addressed to the reason and the interests of the people. Without a radical change of policy, the improvements, of which it is susceptible, can only be introduced through the influence of the same

motives. The superintendent has heretofore expressed the belief, that nothing was wanting but a full view of the subject on the part of the inhabitants of school districts to bring into the schools a better grade of teachers. He has seen nothing to shake his confidence in this opinion, although it must be admitted that the change for the better on which it is founded, proceeds by very slow degrees. When the measures adopted by the regents of the university shall have been carried into full effect, a more rapid and general improvement may reasonably be anticipated. These measures will now be briefly considered.

Education of Common School Teachers.

In pursuance of the provisions of the act before referred to bearing date the 2d May, 1834, and authorizing the regents of the university to apply a part of the income of the literature fund to the education of common school teachers, a plan was reported to the regents for the purpose of carrying into effect the intention of the act on the 8th of January, 1835, and adopted at a subsequent meeting of the board. The outlines of the plan are briefly as follows:

An academy was selected in each of the eight senate districts, and a department engrafted upon it for the education of teachers. To support

these departments, each academy received from the literature fund a sufficient sum to procure the following articles of apparatus, &c.:

An Orrery.
A Numeral Frame, and Geometrical Solids.
A pair of Globes.
A moveable Planisphere.
A Tide Dial.
An Optical apparatus.
The Mechanical Powers.
A Hydrostatic apparatus.
A Pneumatic apparatus.
A Chemical apparatus.
One hundred specimens of Mineralogy.
An Electrical machine.
Instruments to teach Surveying.
A Map of the United States.
A Map of the State of New-York.
An Atlas.
A Telescope.
A Quadrant.

In addition to this provision, the sum of $191 was appropriated to enlarge the library of each of the academies in which a department was established. These expenditures were intended merely to put the departments in operation. For their support, each department is to receive annually to pay the salary of a tutor, the further sum

of $400, from the literature fund, which, in addition to the means of the academies, was deemed adequate to the object.

The students in the departments are required to be thoroughly instructed in the following branches or subjects:

1. The English language.
2. Writing and drawing.
3. Arithmetic, mental and written, and book-keeping.
4. Geography and General History combined.
5. The history of the United States.
6. Geometry, Trigonometry, Mensuration, and Surveying.
7. Natural Philosophy, and the elements of Astronomy.
8. Chemistry and Minerology.
9. The constitution of the United States, and the constitution of the State of New-York.
10. Select parts of the Revised Statutes, and the duties of public officers.
11. Moral and Intellectual Philosophy.
12. The principles of teaching.

To these subjects it is understood to be in contemplation of the regents to add Algebra.

The term of study is three years, but only eight months in each year are devoted to instruction. There is a vacation of four months in win-

ter, to enable the students, many of whom will, it is supposed, need such a resource, to teach a distinct school, and thus earn something to support them in completing their course of preparation. At the end of the term, each student is to be examined publicly, and if he passes a satisfactory examination in all the prescribed subjects of study, he is to receive a diploma under the seal of the academy.

The departments were organized in the summer of 1835, and in several of the academies they are already in successful operation. For the purpose of securing entire uniformity in the course of study and the results, the principals of the academies were invited to meet a committee of the regents of the university in the city of Albany, on the 1st of September last, and settle some preliminary arrangements. The meeting was attended by seven of the eight gentlemen, who were several days in session, the extent to which instruction in each subject of study should be carried was agreed on, and a comparison of opinions was made on every question connected with the management of the departments under their direction. The course has commenced on a uniform plan in all, and it will be carried out in such a manner as to secure uniform resuls. The influence of a large number of individuals tho-

roughly trained to the business of teaching cannot, if they find employment, be otherwise than beneficial, and it may do more than all other causes combined to bring about a salutary reform in the only particular in which the common school system can be considered materially defective. If the liberal provisions of the legislature are not met with a corresponding liberality on the part of the people of the state, the measures adopted by the regents of the university will be fruitless. The individuals who shall have prepared themselves for the business of teaching, must abandon it unless it yields them a fair remuneration for their services. But on the other hand, if sounder views on this subject shall be found to prevail; if the inhabitants of school districts will but see their true interest in employing well trained teachers, our common schools will soon bear, in their intellectual condition, an honorable relation to the other parts of the system, and exhibit in all its internal details the same order and perfection, which prevail in its organization. The provisions of the law have been ample, and it remains only to give an impulse to that effective public opinion which when once moved, is sure to bring about the results, to which it is directed. To this end the attention of all the friends of education should be turned. The people have the principal control of the sys-

tem, and their opinions must be influenced. Discussion in almost any shape may promote the object. It attracts the attention of individuals and the public; and even though it may not always point to the true remedy, when it has exposed a defect, it can hardly fail to draw out the views of others and shed light on the subject.

In passing the law, under which departments for the education of teachers have been established, the legislature has merely provided for the more complete execution of a design long entertained, so far as respects the employment of the academies for the purpose. The propriety of founding separate institutions upon the model of the seminaries for teachers in Prussia, was for several years a subject of public discussion in this state. It was contended on the one hand, that such institutions would be more likely to secure the object in view; and on the other, that it might be as effectually and more readily accomplished through the organized academies. By the act of 13th April, 1827, the avowed object of which was "to promote the education of teachers," the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars was added to the capital of the literature fund, the income of which is appropriated to the support of the academies subject to the visitation of the regents of the university. Thus, although the

plan of engrafting upon the academies departments for the preparation of teachers may not have been contemplated at that time, yet this measure is to be regarded only as a more complete devolopment of the design of the legislature in passing the act referred to.

School District Libraries.

By an act passed at the last session of the legislature, the inhabitants of school districts were authorized to vote a tax, not exceeding twenty dollars, to purchase a library for their common use, and such additional sum as should be deemed necessary to procure a book case. They were also authorized to vote a further tax, not exceeding ten dollars in any one year, to make additions to the library. As has been already stated, they were impowered by the same act to choose at the annual meeting of the district, a librarian, whose duty it should be to take charge of the library, and have the care and custody of it under such regulations as the inhabitants of the district should prescribe.

The object of this provision has not been in all cases distinctly understood. It was not so much for the benefit of children attending school, as for those who have completed their common school education. Its main design was to throw into

school districts and place within the reach of all their inhabitants, a collection of good works on subjects calculated to enlarge their understandings and store their minds with useful knowledge. It was believed that such a measure would come strongly in aid of other provisions, adopted with a view to the intellectual improvement of the great body of the people, and to point them to the true sources of their respectability and power. Works of a juvenile character would not, therefore, as a general rule, be suited to the purposes of the law. For a more full understanding of the subject, the following extract from the report of the superintendent for the year 1834, in introducing it to the attention of the legislature, is subjoined.

"If the inhabitants of school districts were authorized to lay a tax upon their property for the purpose of purchasing libraries for the use of the district, such a power might, with proper restrictions, become a most efficient instrument in diffusing useful knowledge, and in elevating the intellectual character of the people. A vast amount of useful information might in this manner be collected where it would be easily accessible, and its influence could hardly fail to be in the highest degree salutary, by furnishing the means of improvement to those who have finished their

common school education, as well as to those who have not. The demand for books would ensure extensive editions of works containing matter judiciously selected at prices which competition would soon reduce to the lowest rate at which they could be furnished. By making the imposition of the tax wholly discretionary with the inhabitants of each district, and leaving the selection of the works under their entire control, the danger of rendering such a provision subservient to the propagation of particular doctrines or opinions would be effectually guarded against by their watchfulness and intelligence. The power of the inhabitants to lay taxes, is restricted to specific objects, and a legislative act would be necessary to enlarge it."

The law has already been carried into effect in numerous instances, and all that is necessary to ensure a much more extensive application of its provisions, is a cheap edition of books on useful subjects, and unexceptionable both in their matter and style. The superintendent has been requested in one instance to make a selection of books for a school district, and in several other cases incidental questions, connected with the collection of taxes for this purpose, have been brought before him, showing conclusively that the law has already attracted a good deal of attention, al-

though it was very recently passed, and cannot yet be generally known.

Expenses.

Although the common school fund amounts to nearly two millions of dollars, and yields an annual income of more than one hundred thousand dollars, it pays but a very small proportion of the expenses of the common schools.

The expenditures in a school district, embrace three classes of objects:

1. *The compensation of teachers.*
2. *The construction of school-houses, and supplying them with necessary appendages and fuel.*
3. *The purchase of school books.*

The two first classes of objects are provided for by law, so far as to authorize or direct the necessary funds to be raised; and the third is left entirely to voluntary contribution.

1. *The compensation of teachers.* The sum of one hundred thousand dollars is annually distributed to the school districts from the common school fund, and is appropriated to the compensation of teachers, who have been inspected by the proper authority and received a certificate of qualification. The board of supervisors in each county are required to cause to be levied, by tax,

on each town, a sum equal to that, which such town receives from the common school fund as its quota of the annual income. The sum thus levied, is also appropriated to the payment of the wages of teachers qualified according to law. The inhabitants of each town have authority to vote, at their annual town meeting, an additional sum, not exceeding the amount directed to be raised therein by the supervisors; or in other words, not exceeding its quota of the income of the common school fund. Thus each town is annually taxed to an amount, equal to the sum it receives from the common school fund, and it may by its own voluntary act, be taxed twice that amount.

These sums are paid to the commissioners of common schools in each town, who distribute them among the school districts within their jurisdiction, according to the number of children in each district over five and under sixteen years of age. Several towns have local funds, the income of which is also paid into the hands of the commissioners, for distribution with the other school moneys, and is also appropriated to the compensation of qualified teachers by force of a provision of law, which requires all moneys paid by the commissioners to school districts to be so applied.

The amount of money derived from these several sources in 1834, was as follows:

From the common school fund, ...	$100,000 00
By taxation, ...	193,560 28
From town funds, ...	18,620 92
	$312,181 20

This sum is not all paid for teachers' wages, and it is less than half of the amount paid for that object in 1834.

As has been observed in another part of this report, the sum of $72,674·06 is raised by tax in the city of New-York, and the sum of $1,262·77 in the city of Albany, for common school purposes, in addition to the amount required to be raised to meet their respective quotas of the common school fund. Of these two sums, about $50,000 is expended on school-houses, and should, therefore, be deducted from the above sum of $312,181·20, in order to obtain the precise amount of public money, paid for teachers' wages, which will be $262,181·20.

In 1834, the whole amount reported as expended for the object last mentioned, was $682,059·89, from which deducting the above sum of $262,181·20, the balance is $419,878·69.

This balance is raised by rate-bills as follows: At the expiration of each term in a school dis-

trict, the trustees pay the teacher so much of the school moneys, as is appropriated to that term by vote of the inhabitants of the district at their annual meeting, and the residue of his wages for the term is collected of all, who have sent children to school in proportion to the number of days their children have attended. Indigent presons may be exempted by the trustees from paying any part of the rate-bill; so that the compensation of the teacher for the term, excepting so much of it as is provided for by the public money, is paid by such of the patrons of the school as are of sufficient ability to pay any thing.

It is proper to add that parents may, if they please, pay directly to the teacher the amount due from them. In this case, the amount so paid is not included in the rate-bill, and the fees of the collector, who is allowed five per cent on all moneys collected by him, is saved by the person or persons making such payment.

These provisions constitute the entire law for the compensation of teachers. They are founded upon the principle, that the income of the common school fund, with an equal amount raised by taxation, and such further sum not exceeding that amount, as may be voted by the inhabitants of towns, shall be appropriated exclusively to that object; and that the residue shall be provided by

those, whose children have the benefit of instruction.

This rule is, as respects the pecuniary ability of the contributors, often unequal. Thus, a man worth one thousand dollars, who sends four children to school, pays four times as much as a man worth ten thousand dollars, who sends only one child to school; but, on the other hand, the compensation of teachers is but a part of the expense of the common school system, and as will be seen hereafter, property is very largely taxed for other objects.

2. *The construction of school-houses, and supplying them with necessary fuel and appendages.*

The whole expense of purchasing a lot, building a school-house, and furnishing it with a few indispensable articles, as a stove, water-pail, broom, wood-house, &c. is paid by the taxable property of each school district. But no tax for these objects can be levied unless it is voted at a regular meeting of the inhabitants, by a majority of the persons present. The tax having been voted in the manner required by law, it is assessed upon the persons residing in the district, according to their taxable property, as ascertained by the roll made by the town assessors for town

and county purposes. If a tax for fuel is not voted, it is furnished by the persons sending children to school, in proportion to the number of days of attendance. But if any one neglects on the request of the trustees, to furnish his quota, they are authorized to provide it for him, and charge the amount against him for collection in the rate bill.

The expense of this part of the system is defrayed by a tax on the property, excepting the single case in which fuel is furnished in kind. And if in respect to the compensation of teachers, taxable property may in some cases appear to be unduly favored, it often happens in this case, that it contributes largely to the expenses of the common schools, without deriving any direct benefit from them. A man of wealth may never have sent a child to school in the district in which he resides, and yet his property is taxed to build a school-house, keep it in repair, and furnish it with fuel. It is not designed by presenting this view of the subject, to impugn the justice of the rule. On the contrary, it is believed to be perfectly just on account of the interest which every man of property has in securing, through the moral and intellectual improvement of those who surround him, a substantial basis for that public order and tranquillity, without which the tenure of his possessions would be uncertain and precarious.

On a careful examination of the whole subject, it will be apparent that the proportions in which the expenses of the common school system are provided for by those who educate their children in the common schools, and by the possessors of property deriving no direct benefit from them, are as well adjusted to the accomplishment of the objects of the institution as is practicable.

Property, as such, pays the entire expense of building and repairing school-houses; besides which, it always pays a sum towards the compensation of teachers, equal to the amount paid by the common school fund, and it may pay double that amount. On the other hand, those who send children to the common schools pay somewhat more than four-sevenths of the entire compensation of the teachers, and furnish their children with school books. By regarding extreme cases on either side, some inequality is apparent. But a vast majority of those who educate their children in the common schools, are abundantly able on the score of pecuniary ability, to do so: and wherever an individual has children without the means of educating them, the trustees of the district may exempt him from the payment of any part of the teachers' wages. The exemption takes place at the close of the term. Until that time the children of such a man meet all the others in

the district on terms of entire equality in the school. No child can be excluded from it on account of the inability of his parent to pay for his tuition. It is to be regarded as a settled principle, that the school is open to all the children residing in the district; and nothing short of a degree of impurity of conduct and character, too gross for association with others, would justify the trustees in excluding a child even temporarily from it.

If the expenses of the common school system were all defrayed by a public fund and by property, it is apprehended that the worst effects would ensue. A man with a large number of children, may sometimes feel the expense of their education a burden. But his contributions, for the very reason that they are made with some difficulty, give him a deep interest in seeing that the affairs of the district are managed with economy and prudence. The effect of the present mode of providing for the expenses of the system, is undoubtedly to surround it with interested and careful observers, who will be vigilant in detecting abuses and prompt in seeking the proper redress.

The Prussian system is maintained upon a plan very similar to ours, so far as its expenses are concerned. The government pays something

towards the support of the schools. The property of the vicinage pays something more, and the residue is paid by those who send their children to school, or, in the language of Mr. Cousin, "those who actually profit by these establishments," [schools.]

The common school fund affords nothing more than an inducement to the inhabitants of school districts to tax themselves for the support of their schools. The whole annual expense of the system is about $1,300,000. This sum, divided by the number of children who have received instruction, gives an average annual expenditure of $2·40 per scholar. The common school fund pays but 18½ cents per scholar. Add to this the equal sum raised by taxation, and the amount derived from local (i. e. town) funds, and it is but 40⅓ cents per scholar. But as this amount can only be paid to school districts which have had schools kept three months during the preceding year, by a teacher duly inspected and qualified, it secures, small as it is, a voluntary contribution of nearly $2 per scholar for the purpose of obtaining it.

3. *The purchase of school books.* Every person sending a child to school, must provide the necessary school books. There is provision by law for indigent persons. Possibly there should

be. But it may safely be said, that the case rarely, if ever occurs, in which a poor child is not furnished with the necessary books, through the liberality of individuals.

General Observations.

Some of the most prominent features of the common school system have thus been briefly surveyed, and its policy so far as respects the distribution of power through which it is controlled, has been cursorily examined. It is, emphatically, an institution for the people, and to them has been allotted a large share in its administration. On the zeal with which their task is performed, and on the degree of importance, which they attach to its elevation to a grade commensurate with its high objects, must depend, to a very considerable extent, the rank they will hold in the political system under which they live, and the part they may take in giving a direction to its movements. If in any country knowledge is power, it is here. The influence of all others is feeble in comparison with it. With us, there is no system of entails, or rule of primogeniture, to perpetuate wealth or family distinctions. Wealth may, indeed, give its possessor some advantages in society; but on that theatre of exertion, where the political condition of men and communities is

determined for good or for evil, it is of no account. In this field the contest must be decided by intellectual force; and those whose destinies are involved in the issue, should take care that they are not deficient in the preparation necessary to enable them to maintain their ground against the combinations of more practised and less virtuous competitors. On the part of the people, contests for great principles are always deemed to involve, directly or indirectly, their inalienable rights. With what effect can those rights be vindicated without a sufficient degree of information to see how they are in danger of being impaired? How else shall the people, amid contending appeals to their understandings and interests, be able to distinguish the true from the false! It is in the common schools alone that the knowledge indispensable to their safety can be acquired; for in them a vast majority of the entire population receive all their education. There are few social institutions, which have not at some period in the history of mankind, been made subservient to the purposes of usurpation and tyranny. Schools of a popular character are in less danger than any other of being perverted to such a use: they have never been made, nor from their nature is it easy to make them, an engine for the dissemination of principles tending to dissolve the bonds

of society, or to subvert the great maxims of human liberty. Literary institutions, less popular in their organization may be more easily made the instruments of such abuse. The supervision to which they are subjected is more restricted, and their accountability is not always so direct. But if the common schools are in no danger of being approached for sinister objects, there is another which it is equally important to avert. There is danger that they will never answer the ends of their institution, if the teachers—the body of men who are relied on to infuse into them the moral and intellectual improvement, which constitutes the vital principle of the whole system—are not fully adequate to the task. Will not those who are the most deeply interested in elevating the standard of education, adopt the only measure by which the object can be accomplished? Will they not bring to this subject the practical good sense by which they are distinguished, and see in this, as in all other cases, that even the ends of economy are best answered by employing those who are most skilled in their art? The value of the common school system is universally acknowledged and felt in this State. In this respect public opinion needs no impulse. But it is no more than just to say that the importance of a higher standard of education, is not so generally

or correctly appreciated. Opinion has, however, made some advances in this particular; and a confident belief is entertained that the liberal provisions of the legislature for the preparation of teachers, will meet with such a reception from an enlightened people, as to remedy effectually the only material defect in our common school system, and leave nothing to be desired in relation to it, excepting that it may be permanent in its duration.

JOHN A. DIX,
Superintendent of Common Schools.

COMMON SCHOOLS.

[It will be recollected by many, that three or four months since, a series of numbers on "Common Schools," appeared in the Evening Journal of this city. Several friends of Education, having requested their republication, the author has generously permitted me to place them in a condensed form in this volume.—Ed.]

It is now generally understood among intelligent inquirers, that in many parts of Germany, primary schools, for popular education, have been established by the government of the country, on a scale almost as extensive or general as with us, and that in all such schools, a uniform, appropriate and systematic course of study, with whatever else relates to their internal discipline, is prescribed and upheld by the same authority and fostering care, as that on which the schools themselves were founded. It is also understood, among the well informed on the subject, that the internal condition of the German schools, in respect to the advantages they offer for agood education, is as much superior to that of ours in this state, as our schools in respect to their pre-

sent external organization, are superior to what they were before their establishment by law.

The chief cause of the great inferiority of ours to the German schools, in the point of comparison above noticed, will probably be found to consist in the great difference between the qualification of teachers *there* and *here*, owing to their being more systematically educated for the business of teaching, and to their being better paid in that country than in this. But there are other causes for the inferiority, which are considered not unworthy of notice, at a time when deficiencies in our system of common schools, are becoming *more* and *more* subjects of general complaint, and plans for supplying or correcting them, are undergoing general discussion. The causes to which I allude may be stated in the following general terms: Our common schools, in all their pecuniary or external relations, considered as mere corporate bodies, with certain corporate powers, have long been subjects of the most efficient legal regulation; while in all their internal relations, or in whatever belongs to them as seminaries of education, and especially in respect to the subjects of study, and mode of instruction pursued in them, they have never been the object of any considerable legal charge, but have, for

the most part been left to regulate themselves according to circumstances of time and chance.

In taking the first step for establishing common schools by law, it was natural and reasonable that the first acts of legislation should be specially directed to their external organization, considered as corporate bodies, to be invested with certain powers, for raising funds, building school-houses, employing teachers, &c. But after such organization is completed, does nothing more remain to be done? Is not the great object of a public school, that of improving the youthful mind in the best practicable manner, unattained? Is it not even untouched, except in so far as a provision for mere corporate or animal existence is necessary for intellectual culture? But after such provision is once made, ought not the fostering care of the government to be extended as well to the intellectual or internal department of schools, as to their corporate or external organization? And if that be done, is there not reason to expect that at least some part of the benefit realized in the one case, will be experienced in the other?

The author of this introductory essay, having had considerable opportunity for observing the progress and condition of our common schools: and being desirous to elicit from others, if he can-

not contribute himself, what may tend to promote the great cause of popular education; proposes, in a few brief essays addressed to the friends of that cause, to discuss the question, how far the internal condition of our common schools, with special reference to the course of study, and mode of instruction pursued in them, is a proper subject for direct legislative action, or for indirect control under legislative authority? In the discussion of this question, he will endeavor to show that the officer, placed at the head of the great department of public instruction, ought to be, if he be not already, vested with the right, and charged with the duty, of prescribing the course of study and mode of instruction to be pursued in our public schools, with whatever else relates to their internal discipline. And that next to a suitable provision for the better education and support of teachers, the exercise of such a right, or the discharge of such a duty, would probably tend, more than any thing else, to improve the internal condition of our schools, and make them in that respect what they already are in every other, equal, if not superior, to any other kindred institutions.

At the last session of the legislature, the standing committee of the Assembly, on colleges, academies and common schools, submitted a report, with the draft of a bill, in favor of establishing

a new or separate department in the state government under the general name of the *Department of Public Instruction*, embracing the whole field of education, so far as it is subject to public regulation, from primary schools to academies and colleges; (the officer at the head of the new department to be, ex-officio, Chancellor of the University;) and proposing to transfer to the officer of such enlarged jurisdiction, the duties of the present superintendent of common schools, (or what would be the same in effect, and would *probably* be the result, transferring the present *able* officer who has charge of the particular department of common schools, to the more general department of Public Instruction); thus uniting together, what many think ought never to have been separated, the jurisdiction, by *visitation*, over common schools for popular instruction, with that over academies and colleges for arts and science. Such a union would seem to be more in accordance than the present system, with the original design of the legislature, as declared in the first act passed for the incorporation of the regents of the university (vide Laws of New-York, 7th session, chapter 51).

With the exception of the recent important act of the legislature, and the proceedings of the regents of the university under it, for the better

education of common school teachers; and with a few other *minor* exceptions, where legislative recommendations, or official instructions under legislative authority, have been addressed to common schools, no effective provision has ever been made by law, on the great subject of what should be taught in our public schools, or how they should be conducted, nor has any control over the subject ever been exercised, or claimed to be exercised, under legislative authority.

This *omission* to act on so important a subject, is what we now propose to consider; and the questions involved in its consideration, seem to present themselves in the following order: *Is the omission inevitable?* or, *can and ought it to be supplied?* and *how?*

And, first, is the *omission* inevitable?

An opinion has been advanced by gentlemen whose authority is entitled to the highest respect, that the course of study and mode of instruction pursued in common schools, are not, *in themselves*, proper subjects either for direct legislative action, or for indirect control under legislative authority; that such matters should be left under the general guidance of *enlightened* public sentiment, to regulate themselves, or to be regulated by such local authorities as they may be already subject to.

The opinion, as here stated in the above general terms, is understood to have originated from certain discussions relative to the selection and recommendation of particular school books for the use of schools, by the legislature, or by the superintendent of common schools in his official capacity. Had it been confined to its *original* subject matter, it would not have been controverted in the way it is now proposed to be done. In its original *limited* application to *school books*, the opinion is probably sustained by public sentiment; and in its more general application to subjects of study and modes of instruction, it is admitted to be *plausible*, and *may* be well founded, if not in the *abstract*, at least in reference to the spirit of our democratic institutions, which require the restraints of law on the natural right of self-government, to be the *fewest* possible, consistent with public safety. It is certainly with great diffidence in myself, as well as the most respectful deference for others, that I undertake to controvert such an opinion.

I am aware that it is a well settled principle of modern times, that there are certain matters, chiefly of an intellectual, private, indifferent, or indefinable character, which are not proper subjects either for direct legislation, or for indirect control under legislative authority. Such, are all mat-

ters of faith in religion, and all matters of opinion on whatever subject the human mind is permitted to think for itself: such also are all matters of human conduct, which are of such a private or domestic character, as not to interfere with the rights of others, and therefore not to require public animadversion; and the same may be said of all acts, whether public or private, which, being in their nature indifferent, as to either general good or general evil, the welfare of society does not require or allow them to be regulated or restrained by law. And equally beyond the pale of legislation are all acts which, although not in themselves, or in their consequences indifferent, are nevertheless so indefinable in their nature, that more evil would result from making them the subject of legislative action, by reason of the uncertainty, and how far such action would extend, than from leaving them to be restrained and governed by that moral sense, which, in every community, claims for itself, and may rightfully exercise, a much more enlarged jurisdiction than any legislature to which that community may be subject.

Having attempted to trace, by a very slight sketch, a part of the great line of demarcation, between what *may* and what *may not* be regulated by law, the only question for present discus-

sion is, on which side of the division line, lies the great field of education, of intellectual improvement.

So far as education may be considered as including matters of religious faith or speculative opinion, it is clear from what has been already said, that it lies on the forbidden side of the line. But if we consider education in reference merely to subjects of human knowledge, and to the discipline proper for teaching them, is it equally clear, that it is forbidden ground for legislation? The subjects of knowledge, proper to be taught in our schools, have no *necessary* connexion with matters of sectarian faith, or with any other matters about which there is much diversity of opinion. Certainly none of the common arts or sciences have any such connexion, nor has our civil history, our constitution and laws, or the miscellaneous elements of useful knowledge proposed to be studied in our schools. These subjects with many others not necessary to specify, all lie in open broad day light, and like all other things, plainly seen, they present themselves to all men, with ordinary powers of vision, or understanding, under only *one* aspect. Why then are they not legitimate subjects, if not for direct legal enactments, at least for official instructions from the superintendent of common shools acting under

legal authority? Why leave them to the uncertain, variable and inefficient direction of incompetent and ever changing *local* authorities. They must be regulated by *somebody*, and why not apply to them the same rule that prevails in other cases, "detur digniori," let the power be given to the *more* worthy?

But we are anticipating what more properly belongs to a subsequent part of these essays. Our *present* business is to look at the subject in another light, drawn from the summary view above taken of the elementary principles of legislation. In reference, then, to that view, are the subjects of knowledge taught in our schools, or the discipline under which they are taught, *matters of such indifference in themselves, or of such a private or domestic character, or so indefinable in their nature, that the public good does not require or allow them to be regulated by law, or by a public officer acting under authority of law*? These are questions, which as they appear to me to involve *in part* the merits of the case before us, I shall next proceed to discuss.

And first, it is a matter of *indifference* to the public, what subjects of knowledge are taught in our schools?

The subjects of human knowledge are as numerous and diversified, as the objects which com-

pose the material and intellectual world. Through the great range of this almost infinitude of subjects, man is not required, nor is it permitted to him, in this life, to extend his researches; his years are too few, and his capacity too limited, for so great an undertaking. With the field of knowledge lying in immeasurable extent and variety before him, he may explore such divisions as interest, or chance, or choice, may direct him to; and from these he may select and appropriate to himself, such parts as his strength and opportunity will enable him to gain; but small will be the share which will fall to the lot of the most favored and diligent! How important then, that that share should be well chosen.

They who have but limited time or means to spend in the acquisition of knowledge, as happens to most of those who depend on common schools for their education, have every thing at stake in the kind or character of knowledge they acquire. At the same time, when the selection is to be made, they are unable to make it for themselves: they must depend on others to make it for them, and if it be made, as it ought to be, with reference to what will best subserve the most useful and practical purposes to the pupil in after life; how much need there is of judgment and care of making it! But all this may be said to concern the

pupil only, while our business is to show that it concerns the public also.

The proposition is, I think, plain and almost self evident, that to whatever degree it is important to each individual that the knowledge he acquires should be well chosen, in the same degree is it also important to the community in which he lives. For so long as it is the law of our nature that mind makes the man, and that the mass of individual minds makes up the character of every community, it cannot be more indifferent to the public than to each individual composing it, what *kind* of knowledge that mind is stored with; nor, until all distinction between *good* and *evil*—between *better* and *worse*, be abolished, can it be immaterial to the public, whether youth be taught what is *useful* or *worthless*—*moral* or *immoral*—*true* or *false*. Society has, in short, every thing at stake in the kind and character of knowledge which its youthful members acquire; for according to what they are taught at school, will probably be their value as private citizens—their usefulness in public life, and the prosperity and moral character of the country whose government they are to assume and laws administer. But as this particular branch of our inquiry will again recur, in connection with *other* matters, it is unnecessary, at present, to pursue it

any further. We therefore proceed to another branch of that inquiry—whether the subjects of knowledge taught in our schools, are of such a private or domestic character as to forbid their being regulated by or under authority of law?

In every private school, established by individuals for their own private accommodation, they as founders of the school, are allowed to establish it on *such* a basis—to direct such branches of education to be taught, and *such* course of discipline to be applied in it, as they, in their discretion, may think proper. Whatever interest the public may have in such a school, in reference to its influence, or remote consequences to the community, like all other matters of a strictly private or domestic character, it is conceded at least for the purposes of the present argument, that it is not a proper subject for legal regulation. But in a *public* or *common* school, established by law for a whole school district, where all the inhabitants have an equal right to send their children and where they are all *generally* obliged to send them, because there are no other schools accessible to them, is not the case entirely altered? And does not the question both of right and duty, who *may* and who *shall* direct the course of study and mode of instruction, depend on very different grounds?

If the distinction above taken between private

and common schools be well founded, it disposes, for the present, of the particular question under consideration, and enables us to proceed to the remaining branch of the inquiry—*whether the subjects of knowledge proper to be taught in our schools, are so indefinable in their nature*, as not to admit of the precision required in all legal enactments?

The subjects of study pursued in our schools, are admitted to be in their nature less definable, than most other matters which have been made the subject of legal enactment. But they are not absolutely *indefinable*. Let us take, for example, the subject of *Arithmetic*. Considered either as an art or science, arithmetic appears to me to be susceptible of a description which shall possess the ordinary requisites of a perfect logical definition; the chief of which is that of including in it every thing which belongs to the subject, and nothing more. Considered as a science, arithmetic treats of quantity, as represented by numbers in the abstract. Considered as an art, it is the application of its abstract principles to practical purposes. Now, there can be no mistake as to what belongs to quantity, represented by numbers in the abstract; nor as to what constitutes the application of the abstract laws of number, to practice. There may be, and indeed there

is, considerable difficulty in determining and defining how much of arithmetic, considered either as an art or a science, shall be made the subject of study in schools. Its internal divisions being mostly artificial, and often capricious, are not so fixed and certain, as its external boundaries, which, being established by the laws of nature, are not alterable by man. Yet the fundamental rules of arithmetic, such as notation, addition, division, &c. and their application to practice, in the great rules of proportion, mensuration, &c. are sufficiently definable for all practicable purposes.

There are numerous local statutes and ordinances, on the subject of education, established by the trustees of colleges and academies, which define, with sufficient precision, the various subjects of study pursued under them, and they proceed from an authority paramount to that of the teachers or faculty of the institution, being in that respect the same as a public statute.

By the laws of New-Hampshire for the regulation of primary schools, passed in 1827, the subjects to be taught in such schools were in part described as follows; "The various sounds and powers of letters in the English language, reading, writing, English grammar, arithmetic, geography, and such other branches of education as

may be necessary to teach in an English school." Provisions somewhat similar, are found in other of the New-England States.

I have now, by a very brief course of remarks, endeavored to show that the subjects of study, pursued in our schools, are *not* in themselves, what they have been sometimes assumed to be, matters of such indifference, or of such a private or domestic character, or so indefinable in their nature, as not to admit of being regulated by or under legal authority; and although my remarks on this part of the subject are admitted to be very summary and imperfect, I cannot but think enough has been shown to secure a general concurrence in the conclusions to which I have arrived. But as these conclusions are of a mere *negative* character, tending only to show that a regulation, by law, of the subjects of study pursued in our public schools, would not conflict with certain elementary principles of legislation; it still remains to inquire, *affirmatively*, whether such regulation would be *proper*, either *directly* by law, or *indirectly* under legal authority. And to that end, I submit the following view of the subject believed to be less *abstract*, and hoped to be less unsatisfactory than the preceding one.

For the purposes contemplated by the view here proposed to be taken of the subject, I assume

as a general position, not expected to be controverted, that *what* shall be taught in our schools, as well as *how* they shall be conducted, has, in fact, always been, and must of necessity *always* remain, a *subject* for specific *positive* direction by some *kind* of authority independent of the will and pleasure of the pupil: and that although such *direction* be not in form a *legal* regulation, it is in substance of a similar nature, if not equivalent to it, inasmuch as it is in common with all laws, a regulation proceeding from authority paramount to the persons to be affected by it. Assuming, then, this general position as the groundwork of our future proceeding, it is obvious to remark that it supersedes in a great measure much of the preliminary discussion which has occupied us so long, about matters in the abstract, and that the *real* question for consideration, resolving itself into one of a *mere personal* nature, comes at last to this, *who ought to exercise a right, or discharge a duty, which must of necessity be exercised or discharged by somebody?*—shall it be by the parents or guardians of the pupil? or the trustees of each school district? or the inspectors of common schools in each town? or the legislature of the state? *or the superintendent of common schools, acting under legislative authority?* These are all questions involved in the

consideration of the subject before us, and which it is proposed now to discuss; and

First: *Ought the parents and guardians of the children taught, to exercise the right, or discharge the duty in question?*

Before common schools were established by law, the few which were in existence, being founded by the voluntary association of individuals, were *private* schools in the strictest sense of that term. They were, therefore, according to the principles laid down in a former essay, subject to the control of their founders; and the remedy, for the abuse of such control, lay in the right which each individual member of the association had, to withdraw from it when he pleased. But when schools became established by law, they assumed a very different character. They no longer depended on mere voluntary association. Any person dissatisfied with the school established for him by law, is not, it is true, legally bound to send his children to it; but he *is legally* bound to contribute to its establishment and support, so far as taxes are required or allowed for that purpose. With such a material change in the organization and circumstances of the school, since it became established by law, it is at least reasonable to inquire, whether *some* change has not al-

o taken place in respect to former rights and duties.

The corporate character conferred by the school act on the inhabitants of each school district, and voluntarily assumed by them, necessarily superseded all their previous rights and duties on the same subject matter. Such rights and duties were all surrendered and became merged in the incorporated body of the district; and to that body alone must we now look for all the powers and duties which the inhabitants of the district now possess or are subject to. The school act, in creating that body, and in defining and enumerating its several specific rights, powers and duties, does not include among them the right or duty of regulating, either the course of study or mode of instruction, to be adopted in the district school; and being a body of limited jurisdiction, it takes no right, nor is it subject to any duty by implication. Express authority must be shown for every thing it does, or is required to do. So far as any control over these subjects is given by the school act, to any local authority, it is given to the inspectors of common schools in each town; and being thus delegated to *them*, it cannot lawfully be claimed by the inhabitants of the district. In practice, the wishes of the inhabitants are no doubt consulted as to the studies which their chil-

dren are to pursue; and when these wishes are made known, and found not to be incompatible with the course and order of studies established in the school, they *are*, no doubt, as they *should* be, respected. But still the legal right to control the school in these matters, does not, as the school act *now* stands, seem to be vested in the inhabitants of the district, either in their individual or corporate capacities.

This brings us to another view of the subject. If the school act has deprived the inhabitants of school districts of any former right, or relieved them from any former duty, of regulating the literary or internal organization of their schools, ought it not to be so far amended as to restore them to their former rights and duties? This question must depend on two considerations: the *ability* of the inhabitants to exercise such rights, or discharge such duties; and their *willingness* to do it. If they are able and willing to regulate the system of education for their schools, in all its practical details, they certainly ought to be both allowed and required to do it. This is *plain* and *undeniable*. But how stands the matter of fact assumed in this supposition? *Are* they able, and *are* they willing.

The ability of men to direct any matter entrusted to them, is commonly proportioned to

their practical knowledge of it. And as in all other concerns of life, so in that of education, practical knowledge is the best measure of probable success. But this standard is too rigid to be applied to the inhabitants of a school district; as none but a teacher by profession could come up to it. If they be found to have a general knowledge of the principles of education, derived from attentive observation and reflection on the subject, it is all that ought to be required or expected of them. Let us then compare them with this *secondary* standard. Most of the inhabitants of any school district have probably received a good common education in their own district school; but it was at a period of life when their capacity to observe defects, and institute comparisons between the relative merits of different plans of education, was not sufficiently matured to be called into action. And were it otherwise, whatever they may have done in an operation so intellectual as that of analysing the subject of education, it is not likely that any beneficial results, obtained in childhood, would be treasured up in memory, and preserved for use in after life.

We must therefore conclude, without intending any disparagement to the inhabitants of school districts, that not having *generally* the requisite knowledge, they therefore, and for that reason *on-*

ly, have not *generally* the ability to regulate the important subject of education in their district schools in the best practicable manner.

This conclusion seems to render it unnecessary to inquire whether the inhabitants of the district would always be ready and willing to act, if they were considered competent to the task. But it may not be amiss to observe, that in *practice* the people of the district seldom, if ever, interfere, or claim any right to interfere, with the internal organization of their district school. This proceeds, probably, *in part*, from a consciousness of their inability to direct so important a subject as that of education; and in *part* from their reluctance to act in a matter to which they are themselves so little accustomed, and which they are in the habit of leaving for others to attend to.

As the inhabitants of school districts constitute, together, the great body of the people of the state, the conclusion at which we have thus arrived, that they are both *unable* and *unwilling* to direct a suitable course of study and discipline for their district schools, would at *first* view seem to *conflict* with the great popular principle, recognised and acted on in all our institutions, that the people have in themselves the right of self-government, which they are *competent* as well as *willing* to exercise, and which they *do* and *ought*

to *insist* on exercising. And it is understood, that the *chief* ground of objection to all interference with the internal concerns of common schools by, or under authority of law, is, that *such* interference, by taking the subject from the immediate jurisdiction of the people, would deprive them of a material part of their right of self-government—that of regulating their own schools in their own way—*such* especially is understood to be the chief ground, on which rests the opinion, from high official authority, referred to in a former part of these essays, and which I have undertaken to controvert. And unless the objection on which that opinion rests, can be obviated, or its force mitigated, it will be better to forbear, than continue, any further discussion of a subject involved in such difficulties.

It must be admitted, that if the principle, involved in the right of self-government, be taken in its *greatest* possible latitude—in such a latitude as it has in a *pure untempered* democracy, where the people exercise all powers of government in their own proper persons, it comes in open *direct* conflict with the conclusions arrived at as above stated; so that if our government were a pure democracy, we should have either to retreat from our positions, or stand in hostile array against its constitution. But our government is *not* a pure

democracy, and it is hoped it will never degenerate into one—it is a *representative* democracy, a happy *medium* between the extreme of irresponsible power in a *single* person on the *one* hand, and the licentious power of an unrestrained *multitude*, acting by and for themselves, on the *other*. The principle of self-government, as recognised in our constitution, and acted on in all our civil institutions, is admitted to be *fundamental* and *cardinal*, but it is qualified and tempered by another principle, claimed to be equally fundamental and cardinal—the principle of representation. With the exception of the elective franchise, and the limited jurisdiction conferred on the people, acting directly *by* and *for* themselves at town meetings, and a few other minor exceptions, we do every thing by *representation*. Our constitution was originally formed, and has been since revised and amended by representatives from the people—our laws have always been made by representatives—their adjudication is always by representatives, if not directly from the people, indirectly so, from their *immediate* representatives—and when the law is thus adjudicated, it is finally executed by representatives.

Keeping in view this cardinal principle of representation, and carrying it out in *practice* according to its extent in the *theory* of our govern-

ment, can we allow to the objection under consideration the weight it seemed at first view to be entitled to? is there in *reality* any conflict between the positions assumed by us, and the right of self-government secured to, and enjoyed by, the people? We certainly mean no disparagement of that right, much less do we seek to infringe it. All that we propose is to extend to the government of common schools, the same principle of representation, as already pervades almost every other institution. It is true that we charge the inhabitants of school districts, taken indiscriminately, with inability to manage, in their own proper persons, the internal affairs of their district school; but we do *not* propose to deprive them of such management by their representatives—on the contrary we seek to confine it *to* their representatives—to *such* representatives, *as* from their superior observation, experience and knowledge of the subject, will be presumed to bestow upon it all the attention which its importance requires. *Such* a representative we consider to be the superintendent of common schools, acting under legislative authority, and responsible to the legislature for what he does; and with *such* a representative at their head, presiding over and directing their *internal* affairs, we maintain, and shall hereafter more fully endeavor to show,

that our common schools might be greatly elevated in character, and the disparity—amounting at present to contrast—between their external and internal condition, might be greatly lessened.

We shall next inquire whether the school master in each school district ought to be required, or allowed, to regulate the internal concerns of the district school.

Without reference to the *abstract* right of the case, or to what *ought or ought not*, to be independent of particular circumstances; we find in *practice* the school master, in almost every district, in undisturbed possession of *plenary* jurisdiction *de facto*, over the whole subject of education in his district school; and that not from any wilful usurpation on his part, but from the actual necessity of the case; for the subject cannot regulate itself; it must be acted on and regulated by somebody; and in the absence of all other persons, claiming, or pretending to have any authority over it, the school master, being the only person necessarily and immediately connected with it, must, *able*, or *unable*, *willing* or *unwilling*, regulate it himself. Ought this to be so? Ought the subject of such a jurisdiction to remain any longer *a derelict*, unclaimed, unnoticed by any other competitor?

If we had any reasonable assurance that the

school master would always, or in ordinary cases, be a man of sufficient age, education and experience, to enable him to select the best subjects of study, and apply the best mode of instruction; and that he would duly investigate so important a subject before he acted on it, there would be no necessity, nor would it be right, to interfere with his assumed jurisdiction over a subject which seems naturally enough to belong to him, and which he has so long enjoyed without any disturbance from adverse claimants. Uninterrupted possession, from time immemorial, seems to have conferred on him at least a show of right, which ought not, at this late day, to be lightly disturbed. But what is the fact as to these supposed qualifications in the school master, of age, education, experience, and disposition to investigate? Is it not notorious that he is generally deficient in all of them? That he is commonly a young man who has just completed his own education, and resorts to the business of educating others, not as a permanent employment for life, but as a mere temporary expedient, until he can find some other occupation more profitable or congenial to his views? Is it not also notorious that his education is generally obtained at a common school, and seldom extends much beyond the elementary requisites of reading, writing, and

arithmetic? That females are often employed as teachers, whose qualifications fall short even of these humble requisites?

In this brief description of the ordinary defects observable in common school masters, I have endeavored not to exaggerate; and I do not believe I have gone beyond the reality. Nearly all the objections now urged against our common schools, are aimed at this one point, the *incompetence* of their teachers. *That* is the all-absorbing subject of general—of almost *universal* complaint. It has given rise to the various plans and suggestions for improving our schools, which have engaged so much of the public attention for the last few years, *some* of which would probably alleviate the evil complained of, but *none* entirely remove it. The evil has its origin in a source which none of the plans or suggestions of the complainants would ever reach. It proceeds chiefly from a determination of the inhabitants of school districts, to keep down the compensation of their teachers, to an allowance so small, that men of sufficient age, education and experience, to conduct a common school as it ought to be conducted, decline a business in which they would be so inadequately paid. Such a determination on the part of the inhabitants of school districts, is unfortunate; but it seems to be fixed and unaltera-

ble; at least it cannot be altered by compulsory legislation. The people *have*, and of right *ought* to have, the power of determining the amount to be charged on them for the support of their schools. But so long as they persist in preferring the *cheapest* to the *best*, because it is the *cheapest*, they must expect to suffer all the evils of incompetent teachers. And since the source of these evils cannot be removed, it becomes important to inquire whether the evils themselves cannot be in some measure mitigated or counteracted, without attempting to reach and correct them at their original source.

To me it appears *morally certain*, that if the subjects to be taught in our schools were arranged in natural order, specified and defined with the greatest possible precision, and the leading principles on which the art of instruction depends, were unfolded, explained and presented in the *best possible* light, and their importance inculcated by reiterated injunction, by "*line upon line, and precept upon precept*," the teachers of our common schools, acting in obedience to such a standard, established on such *paramount* authority as should secure their implicit submission, would be relieved from most of the embarrassments they now labor under; and the evils now suffered from their incompetence, would, in some

respects, be entirely removed, and in others greatly mitigated. They would then have a *plain* path to pursue, with a *plain* guide to direct them, where they now have to seek out their own way, through what, to most of them, is an unexplored, or at best, an unfamiliar region; with either conflicting guides, or no other guide to direct them, than their own unaided sagacity.

On the question therefore, how far the teachers of our common schools ought to have the right of regulating the course of study, and internal discipline of their schools, I come to the conclusion, as before intimated, that they have already, by public sufference, too much jurisdiction over the subject, (regard being had to their present qualifications,) and that instead of having any farther power conferred on them, they ought to be restrained from exercising a material part of what they are already in possession of.

The foregoing remarks, on the powers which *are*, and which *ought* to be possessed by teachers of common schools, were digested and reduced to the form in which they are now presented, before any measures had been taken for the better education of teachers. If the *plan* recently adopted by the regents of the university, in pursuance of a recent act of the legislature, for securing a better education to our common school teachers,

which is now just going into operation, shall, as it is hoped and generally believed it will, produce all the beneficial results expected from it, *some* part of the foregoing remarks will require considerable qualification; enough, however, will, I think remain to show that common school teachers, under any *probable* state of circumstances, ought not to be *allowed* to exercise *all* the powers, or *required* to discharge *all* the duties which are now thrown upon them.

It will be next in order to inquire whether the course and mode of study in a district school ought to be regulated by the trustees of the district.

The powers and duties of the trustees of school districts, are defined with great precision in the school act. But among them is not to be found any power or duty relative to the literary concerns of their school, excepting only the duty of "contracting with and employing all teachers in the district." All their other powers and duties relate to the mere *temporalities* of the school. There might perhaps be some question whether under the power to "*contract with and employ teachers*," they could not control the internal discipline of their school, by making it a condition in their contract with the teacher, that he should adopt a particular course and mode of instruction

to be prescribed by them. But whatever power they may, in this way, indirectly possess, they never, I believe, attempt to claim or exercise it. They confine their cares as they ought to do, to the mere corporate or external concerns of their school; leaving its internal or literary concerns to the care of others.

Most of the reasons assigned for withholding from the inhabitants of the district, the right to regulate the internal discipline of the school, apply with equal force to the trustees, who are the representatives of the inhabitants chosen from among them, and alike unable and unwilling to take upon themselves a burden which they are so unaccustomed to bear. As to the trustees, therefore, no farther discussion of the question under consideration is required.

We come next to the inspectors of common schools in each town. What rights and duties have they, or ought they to have, in regulating the course and mode of study, in a school subject to their visitation?

The duties of the inspectors, like those of all other officers under the school act, are particularly enumerated and defined, and among them is one described as follows:—"To visit all such common schools within their town, as shall be organized according to law, at least once a year,

and to examine into the state and condition of such schools, both as respects the progress of the scholars in learning and the good order of the schools; and they may *give their advice and direction to the trustees and teachers of such schools as to the government thereof, and the course of study to be pursued therein.*" By this provision of the school act, the inspectors are required to visit and inspect the schools in their towns, and to give their *advice and direction, as to the government thereof, and the course of study pursued therein.* If the term *visit* be taken according to its original common law acceptation, it confers upon the inspectors full jurisdiction over the subject of education in all the schools visited by them. But the term is probably used in its more popular sense, where it means nothing more than simple inspection. However this may be; and although full *visitatorial* powers seem to be conferred on the inspectors, by the provision; that they may give their *advice and direction* to the *government* of the school, and the *course of study to be pursued in it*, it is understood, that the inspectors, in discharging their duty as visitors of schools, ordinarily do nothing more than merely examine, or witness the proficiency of the scholars in the several branches of study which may happen to be taught in the school at the time of

their visitation. They do not think of prescribing what those branches of study shall be, or how they shall be taught. Whether their omission proceeds from a consciousness of their inability to act in the matter, or from a supposed want of power, or from an idea of their interference being unnecessary, it is not material to inquire. The *fact* of the omission is all that is material to my purpose: and of *that* fact, no one, familiar with the state of our common schools, can have any doubt. It will not be pretended that the inspectors ordinarily do more than simply to inspect what is going on in the school. They may sometimes inquire into the course and mode of study, but it is *only* an inquiry; it is not followed up by prescribing a different course or mode, or by correcting any errors found in the one already established. Inspection, in its common acceptation, is merely to observe and report; not to originate and direct. In this sense it is probably generally understood by the inspectors; and according to that understanding of it, they proceed in their official acts. And perhaps it is as well that it should be so, as otherwise. For if the inspectors should undertake to establish, on their own local authority, a regular system in education for the schools in their town, although it might be warranted by the provisions of the

school act above referred to, I apprehend it would not generally be received by the teachers with that deference and respect which is necessary to secure their implicit obedience to it. And independent of the consideration, its being liable to change every year, on the coming in of new inspectors, would constitute another objection to such a system. But if it be established on other authority, more general, competent and controling than that of the inspectors whose jurisdiction is limited to their own town, it would be much more likely to command respect and secure implicit obedience. It would then only remain for the inspectors to see that the system thus prescribed should be followed in the several schools of their town, which would in effect be no more than they already do; it would be simple inspection; their real and nominal duties would then be the same, and we should avoid the reproach of having a duty enjoined by law, not fulfilled in practice. We come now to the inquiry next in order, whether the power in question—that of establishing a system of education for our common schools—belongs to the legislature, and ought to be exercised by them?

That the legislature possess such a power is, I think, undeniable. They are the founders of all our common schools established under the

school act. Those schools derive their very existence from that act, and a material part of their pecuniary support is also contributed by the state. It is true that the co-operation of the inhabitants of the several districts is necessary to the establishment of the district schools; but that co-operation ought, I think, to be considered rather in the nature of an acceptance of the powers and privileges tendered to them by the state, than as a participation in the original act of foundation: inasmuch as those powers and privileges, by making the district a corporate or organized body, constitute its very life and being.

One of the rights and privileges, which belong in common to all founders of schools, and which has always been considered the most material and valuable, is the right of visitation; which includes the right of making all statutes or ordinances for regulating the course and mode of instruction, and other internal discipline of the schools subject to visitation. If, therefore, the legislature be the founders of our common schools; they have as *such*, the right of establishing a full system of education for the schools founded by them.

I shall take for granted that such a right belongs to them, and proceed to the more important inquiry whether it ought to be exercised by them in their legislative capacity.

If the subjects of study were properly selected, defined, arranged and systematised, and the perfection of the system had been tested and proved by actual practice, it would probably be best to give it the highest possible sanction, by making it as it is in Prussia, at once a subject of direct legislation. But no such system has been yet prepared, and the labor of preparing one will be great and arduous. Besides, many of the first ffeorts in the undertaking will probably be ineffectual or erroneous. Effort upon effort; amendment upon amendment, will be required before perfection will be attained. While the subject is undergoing such a preliminary process of experimental effort and trial, it ought not, I think, to be the subject of direct *positive* legislation. Statute law, when it ordains and commands, is unbending and inexorable: It neither regards the infirmities of those who made it, nor of those who are to be governed by it. What it demands, it insists upon, and *will have*; it *will have its pound of flesh*, "*if it be written in the bond.*" Now all this is right, and a recommendation in its favor, if what it demands with such stern unrelenting spirit, be in itself *just* and *right:* but if it be *not* just and right, then is the law denounced, and the dignity of the legislator impaired.

Until, therefore, a system of education for our

common schools, shall be prepared by some competent authority, and the outlines and divisions of its various subjects shall be described and defined, with more precision than has as yet been attempted, it appears to me inexpedient to make it the subject of direct legislation. It should be left to be first digested, arranged and applied to experimental practice, by some subordinate, but delegated authority, which would always be ready and willing to receive suggestions of improvement; to correct errors when detected, and to mitigate severity when experienced but not deserved.

If, as we have endeavored to shew, the course of study proper for our common schools, be not as yet sufficiently defined, systematised, and established, to become the subject of legal regulation, we need hardly inquire whether the mode of instruction (which we have generally coupled with the course of study as if subject to the same disposition with it) is in any *better* state for that kind of regulation. The mode of communicating instruction depends so much on variable circumstances, such as the age, capacity, and disposition of the pupil; the relation in which he stands to his teacher; the nature of the subject to be taught, and many other circumstances of a similar character, that it is doubtful whether it

can ever be the subject of positive statute regulation; certain it is, that in its present condition it is not susceptible of *such* a regulation; at the same time, it is a very proper subject for official instructions, proceeding from competent authority delegated by law. Such instructions could be accommodated to each case, and varied, to meet the ever varying circumstances of the subject. The great principles of education could by such instructions, be unfolded and explained; their broad and minute lines laid down and defined, and the importance of the whole subject impressed upon teachers by reiterating injunction and untiring perseverance.

Having sought, so *long* and so *far*, for a suitable depository of the important power of regulating the *internal* affairs of common schools, without finding one possessing all the conditions required of it; it now only remains, in the conclusion of this part of our subject, to inquire whether the superintendent of common schools, acting under official responsibility as the chief of a great department of public instruction, cannot safely be trusted with the power in question.

The superintendent of common schools is the official chief of that entire department of public instruction, which includes all the common schools in the state established under the school act.

Whatever may be *now* thought of the powers conferred on him by law: or whatever may be the relation in which he now *practically* stands to common schools, it was, I believe, as I shall attempt hereafter to show, the original design of the school act, that he should be the legal visitor, if not in the common law sense of that term, at least in its popular acceptation, of all the schools in the state established under that act, his right of visitation, if not *expressly* delegated to him by law, being, as I contend, necessarily implied both in the name and in the nature of his office. But independently of any such implied source of authority, the deference and respect naturally paid to such an officer from the presumption that he is worthy of the high trust committed to his charge, must always secure to him a commanding influence in the affairs of common schools.

It is certainly natural that the incumbent of *such* an office, should claim it as a right, and at he same time consider it a duty, to see that a proper system of education be established for all the schools subject to his visitation. Who else can be presumed equally competent and willing to perform *such* a service? From whom *else* emenating, would *such* a system be received by the teachers and inspectors of common schools with like deference and respect? And what *other*

system would be free from the principal objections heretofore stated in reference to plans of education established by any subordinate authority? And to which of *such* objections would such a system, prepared by the superintendent of common schools, be likely to be liable? His official information of the condition of common schools, of their wants and necessities—his opportunity to note their defects and observe their improvements—and the comparison of their relative merits which he is always enabled to make, give him advantages over all others for such an undertaking; and at the same time, the deference and respect always paid to such paramount authority, would be much more likely to secure for any plan, proposed by him, a patient hearing, with a fair trial and successful issue.

But these views are, no doubt, too general and abstract to subserve any very useful purpose. Let us then, look at the subject under a closer view, and with an aim to more practical results.

There are, I admit, reasons certainly plausible and perhaps sound, against an official selection or recommendation of particular school books for the use of schools. These reasons I shall now briefly enumerate, without undertaking to controvert them at present. They may be stated in

the following general terms:—That there is no occasion for any such selection or recommendation, as our school books in most general use, being all of an excellent character, are all nearly equally good; that a discrimination between different books, by adopting *one* and rejecting *another*, would subject the parents of the scholars to a vexatious and needless expense in the exchange of old for new books; and because such a discrimination and change, would involve great injustice to the authors or proprietors of the rejected books. Now, admitting the full force of all these reasons for the present, (but with the reserved right to controvert them at another time,) does it therefore follow that such an interference of the superintendent ought not to be allowed, in respect to subjects of study and modes of instruction pursued in our common schools? Certainly there are not the same objections in *one* case as in the *other*——for the subjects of knowledge taught in our schools, are *not* all equally good or valuable: and although a discrimination between them by selecting one in preference to, or in exclusion of, another, might occasionally subject parents to some additional expense, it certainly would not involve any injustice to authors or proprietors of books, unless they could

show themselves to be authors or proprietors of subjects, as well as books.

The subjects of knowledge taught in our schools, have no *necessary* connection with particular *school books;* indeed their existence, although commonly associated with books, is in reality independent of them—books being no more *necessary* to the existence of subjects of knowledge described in them, than a *casket* is to the *diamond* it contains—or a *record* to the *fact* recorded in it. So also in respect to *modes* of instruction, it is obvious that their connexion with particular school books is equally unessential and unnecessary.

Keeping then in view the distinction between subjects of knowledge or modes of instruction, and the books used in teaching the *one* or applying the *other;* whatever objection there may be to any *official* interference of the superintendent of common schools in respect to school books, is there any *real substantial* objection to such an interference in respect to subjects of study or modes of instruction? Let us take either of these separately—say in the first place *subjects* of study—and see if there be not considerations, in favor of such interference, entirely outweighing any conceivable objections to it.

We have before endeavored to show, how im-

measurable in extent, and almost infinite in variety, are the subjects of human knowledge, and how much they vary in their relative value, to youth, who, in their opportunities for education, are limited to common schools. Assuming, therefore, the general position, that all, who depend on common schools for their education, have every thing at stake in the selection of subjects, to be studied by them, we are at once brought to the question, who ought to make the selection? Answering in the abstract, every one will say it should be done by *him* who best understands and appreciates the relative value of the different subjects from which the selection is to be made, and who can best define and prescribe the extent and order in which they ought to be studied. But *who* is *he* that *has*, or is most *likely* to have, such superior knowledge and practical skill?

Until our teachers become better qualified to discriminate and select subjects of study for their schools, it is plain that the remedy, for their deficiency, must be the substitution, in their place, of some other and more competent persons to perform the service for them. But here, again, recurs the question, who shall that person be? We have already seen that neither the inhabitants, nor the trustees of school districts, nor the inspectors of common schools in each town, can

be relied on to discharge such a trust; and as to the legislature of the state, the subject, in its present condition, has been found inappropriate for their *direct* interference. What then remains, but either to leave the evil without a remedy, or to give to the superintendent of common schools, if he do not already possess, the necessary remedial jurisdiction over it?—a jurisdiction conferred by legislative authority—to be publicly exercised under the eye of the legislature—subject to their revision and control, and to continue during their good will and pleasure.

Having now adverted to a few, of the many, considerations in favor of an official interference of the superintendent of common schools, in respect to subjects of study in schools, it is proper to inquire, whether considerations of equal weight, do not require *such* an interference in respect to modes of instruction.

Education, in its most limited sense, may be defined, to be a process for improving the faculties of the mind, cultivating the affections of the heart, and acquiring and treasuring up knowledge. Considered in reference to the abstract principles on which it depends, it is entitled to the rank of a science; while in reference to the application of these principles, it is only an art. Viewed as a science, it requires in its professors

a profound knowledge of the principles of both mental and moral philosophy; while as an art, it requires, in its teachers, great practical skill and experience in the application of its scientific principles. With such severe requirements, the ordinary teachers of our common schools cannot, of themselves, comply: and for that very reason it appears to me, they ought to be guided and directed by instructions from such an official superior, as is the superintendent of common schools.

It is now generally conceded that the progress made by youth in the acquisition of knowledge, depends more on the *mode* of instruction, than on the *time* spent in study. But without relying on *such* a concession, we will refer for proof of the position to well authenticated facts. From the returns made to the superintendent of common schools, as stated in his annual reports to the legislature, it appears that the whole number of children taught in common schools, does not materially vary from the whole number between the ages of five and sixteen years, residing in all the school districts in the state. Hence, it necessarily results, that children, on an average, spend more than ten years of their life at school—a length of time much greater than is spent in acquiring any of the common arts or professions of

life—and as one would think, abundantly sufficient, with ordinary diligence, to complete the most extensive course of study ever prescribed, or suggested, for common schools. And so it undoubtedly is. But how much of such a course is in fact completed? In our best schools—in such as ought to be models for all the rest—we have the satisfaction to find that *such* a course in its fullest extent is completed within the ten years allotted for that purpose; while in a great majority of our schools—in such a majority, indeed, as to give character and reputation to the whole—the progress, made in such a course, is so limited and partial, as to amount to little more than a beginning compared with the whole extent of the course. How is so great a difference in the results of such schools to be accounted for? The children taught in them taken together on an average have the same capacities for improvement, and spend the same time at school; yet the progress they make in study is almost immeasurably different. To account for such different results from things of the same general nature, we must look at the particular circumstances in which they differ; and as those circumstances may all be traced to the different modes of instruction adopted in the different schools, the difference in

such modes, must, therefore, be the cause of the different results produced.

Since then so much depends on the mode of instruction to be adopted in schools, and so many common school teachers are ignorant of the best modes that can be adopted, it would seem not to admit of much doubt that until our common school teachers shall be generally better qualified, than at present, for their duties, they ought to be enlighted from time to time by official instructions from the superintendent of common schools, as well in respect to *modes* of instruction as to *subjects* of study.

The great principles of education, so far as they relate to the *mode* of instruction, are neither numerous nor complex. They may probably be reduced to the following—to make study voluntary and agreeable to the pupil—to cause it to act directly on his understanding and through that medium on his memory—to give all his pursuits and exercises such a direction as to cultivate his inventive faculty by requiring him to originate and carry out new trains of thought—and finally so to communicate instruction, and impart skill as to enable him to apply them to practical purposes, in after life. Such are now considered the leading principles on which instruction, considered as one of the useful arts chiefly depends—

most of the other principles or rules of teaching being considered as merely subsidiary to the cardinal ones here laid down. And it has long appeared to me that these great principles are so prominent and well defined—so obvious when explained and easy of application—that much good would result to the cause of common school education, if the officer presiding over it, would make them, together with their subsidiary rules or means of carrying them into effect, the subject of his official instructions, inculcating and urging them upon all teachers, trustees, and inspectors of schools, and keeping them constantly alive and active, by reiterated injunction in repeated circulars.

But without speculating any further in the abstract, as to what *might* or *ought* to be done by the superintendent of common schools in the way of prescribing or recommending, *officially*, subjects of study and modes of instruction, for the schools under his charge; it is now proposed to inquire, what was in fact done in that way, when or soon after the present common school system first went into operation.

It is understood that the gentleman who first held the office of superintendent of common schools, (from 1812 to 1821,) as soon as our present school system had become matured and perfected in its various corporate or external rela-

tions, feeling the weight, and yielding to the influence, of the considerations which formed the subject of the last preceding essay; and being desirous to prevent all doubt as to his official right to interfere in the course of study and internal discipline of schools, made application to the legislature, in 1819, for express authority to prepare and distribute among all the legally established schools in the state, such instructions for the better *government* and *organization*, as should be thought necessary or proper. His application was granted; as may be seen in the school act of that year, whereby the superintendent was authorised and *directed*, not only to prepare suitable forms and regulations for conducting all proceedings under the school act, but also to prepare "*such instructions as should be thought necessary and proper for the better government and organization of common schools*," and to cause the same to be distributed among all the school districts in the state (vide laws of 1819, chapter 161, section 38.) And the same authority has ever since been continued in all our laws relative to common schools, and is now a permanent part of the Revised Statutes (vide Revised Statutes, part 1st, chap. XV. title 2d, section 9.)

Soon after such authority was obtained, and such a duty was enjoined on him, the then super-

intendent (in 1819) prepared what purported to be the *first* of a series of "instructions for the better *government* and *organization* of common schools," which were published, and distributed among the several school districts in the state then organized under the school act. In preparing those instructions, the superintendent assumed the official responsibility of prescribing, in a brief and summary manner, the general outlines of a course of study for common schools, and after recommending such school books as he considered most suitable for common use, he undertook to give some general advice and direction on the mode of instruction to be adopted in common schools; reserving for some future occasion, a more enlarged as well as detailed exposition of his views on that and all other subjects embraced in his instructions; and it is understood that it was then his intention to persevere in carrying out the plan, of which the general outlines only had been given, until the great object in view should either be attained, or found to be unattainable. So far from any want of authority to issue such instructions, being then suspected, it was considered a matter of duty to issue them, enjoined by a positive provision in the school act then recently adopted, and as that provision is still in force, if such construction of it be correct, the duty originally enjoined still continues.

I am aware that the provision above referrred to has been said, (and on high authority too,) to relate to the organization of school districts, to the legal proceedings of officers under the school act, —and not to the literary or internal organization of a district school; (vide report of the committee on literature, of the senate in 1825.) But any such construction of that provision, appears to me to be against its plain literal import, as well as its true intent and meaning. The subject matter of the provision is "the government and organization of *schools*," not of school *districts*, nor the proceedings of commissioners, or other officers under the school act; all of which are not entirely different subject matters, but are specifically and abundantly provided for in other, and different parts of the act. Now the *government* of a common school, must, I think, include whatever belongs to its internal discipline—the most essential part of which is its *mode* of instruction; and as to its *organization*, it is to me equally plain, that it includes subjects of study; for it certainly includes *that*, without which there can be no school: and as every definition of a school necessarily includes some idea of study, and consequently of something studied, *subjects* of study must therefore be considered as a necessary part of the organization of a common school.

Whether school books are to be so considered, is a question not now under discussion: although it may not be altogether out of place to remark, that as a common school cannot well be conducted without text or school books, a selection or recommendation of particular books for its use, under an express authority to regulate its internal organization, would not seem to deserve the severe denunciation it has on *one occasion* received, of being an act transcending if not contrary to the authority under which it was done.

Subservient to the views thus entertained by the superintendent of common schools in 1819, preparatory arrangements were made by him, for providing suitable books, or treatises, on the new branches of study proposed to be introduced into our schools; particularly on that branch which was to include, "the principles of our constitutional law—the crimes and punishments which form our criminal code, and such parts of our civil jurisprudence, as every man, in his daily intercourse with the world, is concerned to know." But before he had time to bring any thing to maturity, his removal from office, in 1821, by the old council of apointment for political considerations, put a stop to all further prosecution of his plans. His successor in office, (the first who held the office as an appendage to that of Secre-

tary of State) did not, I believe, disapprove of the policy of interfering officially in the internal organization of schools; indeed, it is understood that he occasionally gave an official recommendation of particular school books, and it is well known that he was the author of the plan for the public exhibition of the schools in the several towns throughout the state. But he did not follow up, or carry out, the plan proposed by his predecessor in his instructions of 1819; nor did he, so far as is now known, propose any other plan, having a similar object in view,—nor is it known that any effort has been made, by any of his successors in office, to prescribe in a similar way, (that is, by official instructions, addressed and sent directly from the superintendent to the schools under his supervision,) a course of study to be pursued in common schools, or to interfere, in any other way, in their internal concerns. On this subject, every school has for the most part, been left to regulate itself, or rather, to be regulated by its own school master, with perhaps occasional advice from local school authorities. And such a consequence, resulting from such an omission to act by official instructions, so far from being deplored, has been, and probably still is, viewed by some as desirable: indeed, whether it be desirable or not, is one of the

chief points of the discussion in which we are engaged.

It ought, however, to be stated, in justice to the present incumbent of the office of superintendent of common schools, whose ability to discharge the duties of his office, is not surpassed by that of any of his predecessors, that he has, in some of his annual reports to the legislature, suggested what he considered to be proper subjects of study for common schools: and if those subjects had been embodied in the form of instructions, addressed to such schools, on his official authority, they would have satisfied the highest expectations. But confined, as they are in circulation, to the journals or documents of the legislature, which probably do not reach one in a hundred of the schools in the state, but little practical benefit can be expected from them.

As a further act of justice to the present superintendent of common schools, it should also be stated that in his annual report to the legislature in 1834, after stating, in very decided terms, his objections to an official selection or recommendation of school books for the use of schools, he admits that such a selection or recommendation of *subjects* of study for schools, would not be liable to the same objections, and would not probably "do violence to any existing prejudice:" but

he doubts whether such a step ought to be taken, until "it shall be manifest, that the influence and authority of opinion, have failed to introduce the desired improvement."

But supposing the superintendent of common schools to have an undisputed right to give official instructions on the subject of study and modes of instruction pursued in schools, another question then arises—how are such instructions to be enforced?

It is not now, nor has it ever been, contended that such instructions should, like a law of the state, be absolutely compulsory, with penalties for disobedience. Armed with such *penal* authority from such a source, they would never be tolerated, however worthy, in the abstract, might be the object contemplated by them. If penalties be ever required or permitted, they must be imposed directly by the legislature, not by any subordinate authority. How then are the instructions to be enforced or their observance secured? This end, it appears to me, might, and ought to be accomplished, by confining the distribution of so much of the public school money, as is derived directly from the state, to such schools as should conform to the official instructions sent to them. Such a course of discrimination would proceed on the principle of a *bounty* to conforming schools,

rather than a *penalty* to non-conforming ones; and it would seem to be justified, by its analogy to the principle on which the income of the state literature fund is distributed among academies, by the regents of the university; that income being apportioned among such academies as comply with certain rules and regulations prescribed by instructions from the regents. And indeed the principle, involved in the rules and regulations prescribed by the regents of the university in respect to academies, would seem, in every other view of the case, to justify official instructions, in respect to common schools, from their official head or superior.

But if a discrimination between conforming and non-conforming schools, in the manner above proposed, should be considered objectionable, it it would then remain to consider the next best course, which would be to leave the instructions to rest on their own intrinsic merits, as mere acts of recommendation, proceeding from paramount authority. They might not be at once adopted in all schools, and probably they would not be, but they would soon serve to establish a uniform and general standard of education, which would gradually find its way, first into a majority, and finally into all our schools. Such a standard, once firmly established, would necessarily cor-

rect many of the evils under which our school system now labors. Boards of examiners would naturally apply it to candidates for teaching, and require them to conform to it. And in expectation of such a course, such candidates would naturally direct their preparatory studies with reference to it; or at least they would not be likely to present themselves for examination, until they could conform to such a standard in its most essential requirements. And in that way, one of the greatest evils now suffered, that arising from incompetent teachers, would be gradually lessened if not entirely removed.

On a review of the general train of reasoning pursued in these essays, which I admit to have been somewhat discursive, it has occurred to me that there is one view of the subject, which, as it is understood by many to involve the chief merits of the whole matter, has not been sufficiently noticed. That view is derived from a supposed analogy between schools, considered as places of education, and churches considered as places for religious instruction; it being contended, that inasmuch as all our religious institutions are left to their own self regulation, without seeking or suffering any control or interference from civil legislation—so, our seminaries for education ought in like manner, to be left, under the general gui-

dance of public sentiment, to a like self-regulation.

If the analogy here assumed, as the ground of such a conclusion, be throughout well founded, the conclusion cannot be resisted without impeaching the mode of reasoning which leads to it. But is the assumed analogy well founded?—*Schools*, it is true, are like *churches*, in so far as they are *both* institutions, or places for public instruction; but *here*, where the analogy begins, it *ends*—the object of instruction, in the two cases, as well as the subject matter of it, is essentially different—the object, in the one case, being *spiritual*, in the other, *temporal*—in the *one* case *this*, in the other, *another* world being the chief object of concern. And so also, in respect to the subject matter of such instruction, the difference is equally palpable and striking—in churches taken together in the aggregate, the subjects of instruction are of such a nature, as to give rise probably to more diversity of opinion than almost any other subject of human disquisition; and that circumstance alone, aside from many other considerations, must forever render religious institutions improper subjects for the legal regulations. But in schools, particularly of the elementary order, the subjects most proper for instruction, having no necessary connexion with sectarian or other

disputed matters, do not give rise to any diversity of opinion;—the common arts and sciences, certainly do not—nor does the constitution or select parts of our statute law, or the elements of useful knowledge proposed to be studied in common schools.

There is not then, at least, the same reason for excluding from positive regulation, the subjects of instruction in schools, as in churches, and enough has I think, been said to show, that the analogy, on which the argument under consideration proceeds, is not well founded to the extent assumed in it.

Law is a rule of *conduct*—not of *faith;* of *civil* conduct—not of *religious* practice; and we are at once shocked with the very idea of subjecting religious institutions to a positive regulation by law. But is there any thing repulsive in so regulating common schools? Are they not already actually regulated in part, and in a very essential part by law? And if the same course of proceeding, if not directly by law, by official instructions under authority of law, should be extended to other parts of the system now suffering from neglect, is there not reason to believe that some of the happy results which have followed such a regulation, when partially adopted, would be permitied to follow it in its more extended application?

My chief object in these essays, as stated in my first or introductory number, was to call public attention to what I consider to be a matter of great importance to common schools, that of improving their *internal* condition by official instructions, from their superintendent. In the pursuit of that object, I have endeavored to show that the relation between our common schools and the general state officer presiding over them, ought to become in practice, what I contend it already is in theory; a living, active relation—not confined as it now practically is to school districts considered as mere corporate bodies; but, extended with all its influence to the schools themselves, considered as seminaries of education—thus securing for the intellectual department of our schools, some part of that fostering care, which is now confined to their mere corporate existence.

I must not be understood as meaning to say or insinuate any thing to the disparagement of the present superintendent of common schools. I personally know, and am happy to acknowledge, his distinguished ability, as well as his enlightened zeal in whatever concerns the great cause of popular education; but from the multiplicity and pressure of other official duties, or from a belief, understood to be entertained by him, that

he has not the requisite legal authority, or from both considerations combined, he has hitherto declined and still declines all direct official interference in the internal concerns of common schools; leaving the relation between him and them in respect to such concerns, to remain uncultivated, if not entirely inert and barren. It is this that I consider a subject of public regret, if not of complaint. Without complaining of the superintendent personally, I think the public may complain of the necessity which restrains him from a more active superintendence over the intellectual department of schools; believing, as I do, that by such a superintendence he might greatly promote the cause of popular education, and at the same time acquire for himself another reputation as distinguished as that already acquired by the able and efficient discharge of his other duties.

PROSPECTUS

TO THE

"COMMON SCHOOL ASSISTANT,"

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EDITED BY

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The improvement of common schools is the exclusive object of this paper. From statistical tables it can be seen, that only one pupil in twenty goes higher than the common school. This paper, therefore, will endeavor to assist nineteen out of twenty of the children and youth of these United States, while they are acquiring the only education they are ever to receive.

The necessity of general knowledge and good morals, is admitted by every reflecting man; yet the great majority do not perceive, *that the common schools are the very sources of a nation's intelligence.* The education of this people, taken

as a whole, must be that, and that only, which the common schools are prepared to give. In these primary schools, the nation receives its education and character. And when our safety lies only in the virtue and intelligence of the *whole* people, with common schools the empire and liberty of these states must stand or fall. They are at once the *sources and the guardians of freedom.*

Not only our civil, but our literary institutions —academies, colleges, and professional seminaries, are dependant on common schools. If the children in the common schools acquire a love for letters, a desire for higher improvement; if they, in the elementary schools, make their studies their delight, and the acquisition and possession of truth their purest and highest happiness, they will wish to go from the common school to the academy. In this land of facilities, if the primary school has given the right direction, neither parents nor poverty will be able to keep the youth from the highest degrees of literature and science. But if the children in the neglected, repulsive common schools, are made to hate instruction, and all the means of acquiring knowledge; if they, in the first steps of an education, find their studies a task and a punishment, they will not only avoid the common school

as much as possible, but regard the academy and college with supreme abhorrence. All the allurements of friends will be useless, and the children will probably pass through life with that degree of ignorance which never wants knowledge. If our common schools were what they should be, they would take care of all the higher institutions. The friends, therefore, of these broader, nobler rivers of learning and intellect, should not be unmindful of the springs which create and support. To make academies and colleges flourish, the first step must be taken in the common schools.

Again—it takes more than half of the collegiate course to supply what the elementary schools should, but do not teach, and to correct what they teach erroneously.

Good common schools are, also, necessary to sustain lyceums, libraries, and all associations for mutual improvement. There must be considerable intelligence, and a love of knowledge, for these institutions to appeal to, and stand upon. If the elementary schools are good, the people will be prepared to sustain these useful associations; but if otherwise, the community may know enough to desire, but not to establish or sustain them.

If a young man can receive a good common English education—such an education as every

common school ought to give—he has the power of making the highest attainments. Self-education, with the assistance of the higher institutions, is the best education; and the self-instructor needs only a sound elementary beginning. If the common schools assisted the people as they should, we might see a greater number of those great self-educated men who rise to honor and bless the human race. The common schools now give nothing to the people to commence with, nothing to build upon.

All the moral movements of the day appeal to a good common school education for success. It is idle to distribute the Bible, if we are not able to read. Teaching us to read—*not merely to pronounce words*—but to read understandingly and with reflection, is one of the first moral and benevolent duties of christians and philanthropists. Many receive the Bible and tracts, who are not able even to spell the words, and many more, whose education has been so limited, or defective, that they are not profited by the words they pronounce; and perhaps, by a little designing assistance, are misled into error and bigotry. We would rejoice to see every man possess and obey the scriptures; but to distribute the Bible among those who are not able to read it intelligently, is not only making charity useless, but it

is giving to ignorance and depravity the opportunity of misusing and despising that enlightened benevolence, which was intended and might have been made, the greatest of blessings. There is a work to be done before we give the Bible, upon which much of the legitimate influence of this sacred book is dependant; and this work must be performed in the common schools. Whether the bible society shall be a blessing to the destitute, the ignorant and the outcast, or not, depends, in a great degree, upon the number and character of the common schools; for, be it remembered, they give to nineteen out of twenty all their ability to read and reflect.

The temperance effort is likewise dependant on common schools. Man will seek happiness. If he has it not mentally or morally, he will seek it physically. Gratifying his animal nature for a while in the tippling-shop, may give him a momentary pleasure; but this does not satisfy him, and he resorts to an excessive gratification, which soon diseases his physical nature. And here is the chief cause of human vice and misery: a diseased physical nature, having the predominance over the mental and moral capacities. Reason and conscience, which had been given to him by his Creator to govern his appetites and passions, have never been unfolded or

educated; they never received strength enough to overcome the lower natures, and the day of education is past. The unfortunate being has no other capacity for happiness, than in the indulgence of his grosser appetites. If he signs the temperance pledge, the present allurements of life are such that his appetite to indulge is stronger than his resolution to abstain, and he too often adds the sin of broken vows to the sin of suicide. Our common schools should have such an elevated character, that they would give, to all, the sources of mental and moral happiness. Then there would not be such strong inducements to gratify the senses; then there would be a mental and moral standing in society; a persevering pride; a conscious shame, and a strengh of resolution that would keep the person from the drunkard's fate. Should not the friends of temperance feel that they have a high duty to perform in the common school?

The good order and happiness of society are secured or lost, according to the character of the common schools. Gossiping, seeking pleasure by gratifying the bodily desires, arise from the want of intellectual entertainment. If all received a good elementary education (and this includes thorough instruction in the principles of christianity,) they would find happiness within them-

selves, in reading and study, and in the cultivation and improvement of the heart and head. But society, without these higher and independent sources of happiness, is left to the destructive influence of tea-table tattle, drinking, horse-racing and the gambling table. But the educated have other subjects than their neighbors for conversation,—other sources than vicious places of resort, and neighborhood scandal, for amusement; and other associates than the stupid and ignorant, or the vile and worthless. In good common schools, society may obtain that which will secure morality, industry and enterprise; but if the schools are worthless, society well lose *what it can obtain from no other source*, and the want of which will make the inhabitants weak, degraded and despised. Knowledge is power as well as happiness, and the intelligent community will always have the advantage of ignorance, and the respect of their fellow men. Let the districts and towns, then improve their schools.

The common school should give the farmer a higher education; it should make him better acquainted with nature: more observing, more reflective. The fruitfulness of the soil does not depend so much upon its richness, as it does upon the intelligence of those who cultivate it. If farmers wish to benefit their lands, to increase

their happiness or wealth, or elevate their standing in society, the first thing for them to do is, to improve their schools; to raise the character of that place where all their education is obtained; where the mind is developed, and the intellectual character of the neighborhood formed. A good school make the rich soil a blessing, and the barren spot productive.

The mechanic should cultivate his mind, that his head may help his hands. Science will lessen and lighten his daily task. It will give him the power of making a better article and a better instrument, and it will make him a greater and a better man.

The merchant should have more enlarged views —more intellect. His employment, then, would never descend to a system of higgling, and the profession would be made as noble and commanding in its practice, as it is in its nature. Our schools are so poor, that they have not given to the majority of merchants that mental capital, that intellectual stock, which would be far more productive than crowded shelves with empty heads. And how much enjoyment is lost by making the means of happiness the end! The schools did not furnish a well balanced mind; there was something deficient or wrong when the character was forming, but it is now fixed for life.

Literary men feel the effects of erroneous and deficient early instruction through life. While in the college, they lose much of their time in trying to conquer the vacant, desultory habits of mind, which were formed in the common schools. The superficial methods of study, the entire disregard of any close or systematic application, and the mere verbal recitations of the district school, unfit them for thoroughness or extensive attainments. The vulgar pronunciation, false orthography, and frequent violations of grammar of the primary school, not unfrequently make their after efforts disgraceful and inefficient. Perceiving nothing distinctly in early life, being thorough in no one study at the commencement of their education, and constantly receiving knowledge in a confused manner without arranging their ideas, or expressing them in a clear, forcible style, is an admirable preparation for that hesitating, unintelligible communication of thought, so often witnessed in literary men. Our bad common schools either disqualify us for a literary life, or render that life one constant struggle with our defects and errors. Every thing depends upon a correct, thorough beginning; and the literary part of the community who are now suffering from an improper early education, will strongly

feel the necessity of improving the common schools.

The schools must be elevated that the people may not be deceived by the press. The periodicals which flood the land, frequently try to make "the worse appear the better reason," and the rogue the better man. Constituents cannot be personally acquainted with the candidates, and of necessity must obtain their knowledge of them through the press. But there is in almost every case too fair a representation by friends, and far too foul a one by enemies.

On some subjects, in many parts of the country, the press is the sole agent in the formation and publication of opinion; and it may be made a strong engine of evil. This will certainly be its influence, unless the people are intelligent enough to detect its errors, and virtuous enough to be untouched by its corruption.

But what shall prepare the whole people to meet a free press? To educate is not the office of the press; its design and office is to convey information, not to educate. It presupposes an education, and appeals to the educated; and if the common schools have not given a sound, thinking public mind, the blessings of the press are lost, and its influence will give power to a few to take away the rights of the many.

Then every thing that we prize and hold dear to our hearts: our prosperity—our social ties and blessings—our literary halls—our free, civil institutions—and our religious rights and privileges, are looking to the common schools for growth, for greatness, *and for their very existence.* We, as a people, must be intelligent to make our laws, and virtuous to obey them; for the laws however wise, will be entrely nugatory, unless we have intelligence to perceive their justice, and virtue to which they can appeal. The people are the sovereignty, and the sun of knowledge must shine upon all. But how can every child and youth in this republic receive that *kind* and *degree* of instruction which our individual happiness and liberties demand? How can knowledge be carried to the door of every house, and to the capacities of every child? How shall mental growth and improvement keep pace with physical? How shall we, as a people, be great and powerful in MIND as well as in wealth? We answer, by sustaining a good school in every neighborhood—within a mile of every dwelling; and this the common school system can do. Then let us stand around this system to defend it, to perfect it, and to carry it into universal operation. The strong arm of government should be thrown around it for protection The wisdom of legislation should watch over it with a parental so-

licitude, and every parent and teacher, and trustee and inspector, and school commissioner, should foster and watch over the common schools, with untiring supervision, and an unsleeping eye.

But alas! do these schools receive that friendly sympathy, that intelligent aid, and that enlightening and fostering care, which their influence and vital importance demand? Do we not live as if our happiness, the peace of society, and the liberties of this nation, rested rather, in our laws and constitutions, revenues and armies, than in the virtue and intelligence of the people? Do not many of the leading, prominent men, overlook the common school, and give their intelligence and patronage to private schools, academies and colleges, making the common school a disreputable thing? Do not the commissioners and inspectors neglect to visit the schools an the law requires? Do not inspectors give certificates to applicants who have not a solitary qualification for the profession? and as the schools will be like their teachers, are not the school funds almost lost, by being squandered on teachers who are an evil rather than a good to the schools? Do the trustees—the local officers—attend to the neccessaries of the school? Do not parents pay more to those who work on the farm or in the shop, than they do to those who give their children their education and character? Do the parents visit the schools and

sympathise with and assist the teacher? Do not the teachers make teaching a *temporary* thing? How many of them make their employment their study—their profession? How many teachers can look into the operations of the infant mind—can sympathise with children, and know how to make them think? How many teachers, in moral character, are fit models for children? and out of the few who are qualified, how many can *impart* knowledge to the infant intellect? Are the school-houses properly located, and is the structure healthy and commodious? Are the text and class-books adapted to the capacities and attainments of the children? has the school room a suitable apparatus?

Further, do the children learn much of a practical, useful nature? Do they *so learn* that which will help them to higher attainments in after life? In learning to read, does not the pupil acquire the habit of articulating indistinctly; of uttering with great confusion the letters in the word, without dividing them into syllables; or of precipitating syllable upon syllable, and words upon words?—Does he not in his first lessons begin to drawl or trail the letters; to abridge or prolong the words, and to pitch the voice into an unnatural key? And does not reading consist in merely pronounc-

ing words—the whole exercise little else than verbiage?

In Arithmetic, can the pupils make an application of the examples of the book, or give a reason for one of the rules they commit? And what is the penmanship, if you do not furnish the made pen, the ruled book, the school-desk, and the round copy plate?

Is the study of geography much more than committing the words of book to memory? Do the pupils transfer the mind from the words to the objects described?

Is not the study of grammar, also a mere exercise of the memoriter and *guessing* faculties? do not children commit the words of the grammar, and then *guess* out the parts of speech and syntax? do they learn any thing of the philosophy of the language—any thing of its primitive, idioms, or genius? do they correct their colloquial violations of grammar? And is the choice and collocation of words, the phraseology, the force and beauty of expression, any better after studying grammar in the common school, than it was before? *Is it not all compulsory, unmeaning and almost useless?*

The common schools, in their present low state, pretend to teach nothing but what we have mentioned—the mere instruments of knowledge,

—and it is seen by a little examination, how defectively these are taught. Do these schools teach any thing which makes the man? any thing of agriculture, of mechanics, or of the growth and health of vegetables and animals? Do the common schools, as they are now conducted, teach the children any thing of their social duties, of their duties as public officers, of their duties to their country, or of its history, laws, and constitutions, or of their duties to themselves and their Creator? What, then, do our common schools teach? *A little smattering of a few instruments of knowledge*—that, which the demagogue, the impostor, and the fanatic would like taught; for these agitators choose to have the people half educated; enough to read what they say; but not enough to know whether it is true or not—not enough to make the people thinking, inquiring, reasoning, independent men. By no means; the demagogue and the impostor must look at the common schools with infinite pleasure; they must see much to encourage their arts, and invite them to action!

Something must be done. There have been of late some fearful warnings, and no patriot will doubt or hesitate *now*. The school funds in some of the states are large enough; the more the people themselves do directly for the schools, the

better will be their supervision. Legislation is not what we want in several of the states. But one thing is wanted, and it must be done throughout the Union. PUBLIC SENTIMENT MUST BE ENLIGHTENED. An informed public opinion must do that for the cause of popular education, which it has done for the cause of temperance. We might have legislated on intemperance up to the present moment, but what good would it have done? there were laws, wholesome and strong, against this vice, before the public voice was heard. But what influence had these laws? how inefficient will the best laws be when public opinion is wrong! laws seldom change opinions, but opinions change laws. Get public sentiment right, and there is no fear but what the laws will be obeyed. Light, then must be poured upon the public mind. The indifference and apathy of parents—the want of preparation in teachers—the laxity and unfaithfulness of the school officers, must be published till they are heard and felt by every citizen. Every thing must be done, that will induce the people to co-operate with the school system. *Wanting* this co-operation, the system may be admirable in its external organization, *and yet not work well.* The internal regulations, those which are of the utmost importance, and which are under the present state of things, necessarily left to

the people, have been criminally neglected. And in a democratic government, it is doubtful whether any thing but the controlling voice of public opinion, can reach the internal affairs of the school.

The columns of this paper will be opened to the intelligent and the experienced; and we respectfully request such to make this periodical the able and enlightened friend, the advocate, and the "assistant" of our common schools. He who supplies deficiencies, remedies evils, or gives mental and moral light to his fellow beings, bestows the greatest blessings that man can give. He who improves common schools, where the people are educated, is the warmest friend of freedom; for to educate us is to make us free. Those who have enlightened mankind, and diffused useful knowledge through the whole community, have been the greatest philanthropists of their race, for we know of no benevolence so exalted as that which pours light and truth into the immortal mind. Those who wish their country to take a high standing among the nations of the earth; who desire the growing greatness and prosperity of their countrymen; and who wish the perpetuity of this noble example of liberty and self-government, will do all in their power to improve the people's schools. We can serve our

country by defending her constitutions, by fighting her battles, and by contributing to her revenues; but never do we serve her so nobly, so effectually, as we do when we strengthen the minds and morals of her citizens. We therefore earnestly invite the patriot, philanthropist, and the christian, to make this cheap paper what it ought to be, and to assist in giving it a place in every family and school-house in the Union. The editor will do all he can for the work; making it, to the schools of this country, the organ of information of the school systems and school books of the more enlightened nations of Europe, that we may be benefitted by all the improvements which are made abroad. Each of the Prussian and French schools receives a weekly paper and a monthly magazine; these periodicals the editor receives, and this sheet will occasionally give such extracts as are adapted to our feelings, and the spirit of our institutions. We shall endeavor to collect and publish statistical information, with the improvements that are made in the cause of education in the United States, and also to show, what, in our view, are the defects of the school systems adopted by each of the states. And as the editor will receive the assistance of learned and experienced friends of education, this paper will endeavor, respectfully, to remind the local officers of the schools, of the greatness of

the trust committed to them, and also offer some humble assistance in the performance of their high duties. It will show some of the evils of ignorance, and the advatages of knowledge, and assist parents in the difficult and responsible duties of educating their children. It will be an "assistant" to teachers, and endeavor to make their profession as honorable and well rewarded as it is useful and important. Hints as to the requisite qualifications of teachers, the best methods of teaching, and the forms of school government will be given by teachers of age and reflection. The location and structure of school-houses will receive attention, and the best text and class books for common schools will be examined and spoken of according to the editor's opinions of their merits.

These are the leading objects of this paper—and it is intended by the friends of education to give it such a *judicious*, *practical* character, that the benevolent will feel (the work being offered at the actual cost) their time well bestowed in asking each family to take a copy in their respective circles.

X21

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